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JAMIE'S LETTER.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD,
Author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Sing, robin, up there in the cherry,
A-swing by your wonderful nest,
Where your brown little wife is holding
Her speckled brood to her breast.
You are happy, I know, but oh, robin,
You would carol a gladder tune.
If you only could read the letter
My Jamie has written me!

Blow in your radiant beauty,
Oh, sing, sing, June, June!
Your heart is afloat with fragrance
From a thousand summers won!
My heart is like some bay blossom
That waited its June to blow,
With the sunshine of love to woo it,
It will bloom like a rose, I know!

Oh, wind, let me tell you a secret!
And listen, oh, sweet, red rose!
Look out! Sir Robin hears it,
And his mate the other knows.
The letter my Jamie sent me,
Was full of his love for me,
And my happy heart runs over,
With its jubilant ecstasy.

Sing, robin, your morniest music!
And lift to the kiss o' the sun
Your sweet, red lips, oh roses!
My summer is just begun!
For Jamie wrote that he loved me;
Do you hear? He loves only me!
And to-morrow he's coming! My lover,
My prince, and the king to be!

SURE SHOT SETH, The Boy Rifleman;

OR,
THE YOUNG PATRIOTS OF THE NORTH.

BY OLL COOMES,

AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "RED ROB," "DA-KOTA DAN," "OLD DAN RACKBACK," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPY IN THE LOG.

An August night of the year 1862 hung over the forests of Minnesota. The sky was overcast with a leaden-gray mist, and the pale moon looked feebly to earth.

The river rolled on through the purple shadows, whispering low and sullenly to the stately pines, its faithful sentinels of centuries gone.

The dreary, monotonous drone of insect wings seemed everywhere, and now and then the hoot of an owl boomed heavily through the night.

The breathings of reposing Nature came in pulsing sobs, as though under her fair and mighty bosom an aching, throbbing heart lay, conscious of the black cloud gathering on the horizon.

Through the woods bordering on the Minnesota river, and contiguous to the Yellowstone Agency, a figure was gliding noiselessly along—a human figure—that of a boy with bright blue eyes and strong, prepossessing features. He was light in form and lithe of limb, and darted onward through the gloom as though it were his own element. He seemed perfectly familiar with his course, and dodged in and out of the tangled mazes of the grim old wood, and along the sinuous windings of the valleys, like a hound upon the trail.

At length he drew up in the forest under some stately pines, where the darkness seemed to have been born of infinity. Dropping the butt of his rifle on the ground, Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman and Spy, listened.

"To-whit-to-whoo-hoo-oo-oo!" rung from the tree overhead.

Seth shook his head thoughtfully.

"I never like to hear an owl hoot," he said to himself, "for it's a bad sign."

He sat down on a hollow log, and after the owl's cry came a deep and profound silence—a silence that became painful and foreboding to the youth. But it lasted only a few minutes when that drowsing hum of nature was resumed.

Sure Shot Seth breathed easier. He whistled softly to himself.

A frog croaked on the margin of the river.

A cricket chirped shrilly in the hollow log.

The wind whispered softly among the stately pines.

A night-hawk screamed above the forest, then with that peculiar hollow boom of his wings, shot up into the sky.

Again the old owl overhead sent forth his hoarse notes quavering upon the air; and the sound was immediately followed by a scrambling among the branches, as upon heavy wing the bird went lumbering away through the night.

Then a silence profound as the grave followed.

"Ah," mused Seth, "that frightened cry and flight of the owl, and this terrible silence have a meaning."

He started to his feet as he spoke. He had been trained in the lore of the woods and night, and could read the sounds of each like an open book, and interpret their meaning and portents. There was a difference in the sound of a stealthy movement and one that was not, though both may have been equally loud. But it took an instinct trained in the school of practical experience to discriminate between them. This our fearless young hero possessed. The silence that succeeded the warning cry of that cowardly old sentinel of the night, the owl, convinced him that danger was approaching. He bent his head and listened intently.

Off in the direction of the river he heard the heavy tread of feet.

"They're comin', sure as death!" the youth said to himself, then he dropped to the ground and crept into the hollow log upon which he had been seated.

The footsteps approached and paused under the great pines within a few feet of the log. The boy knew they were the steps of booted feet, and had some idea to whom they belonged. He applied his eye to a knot-hole in his retreat, and peered out, but all was wrapped in Egyptian gloom. He pressed his ear to the orifice and listened. To and fro beneath the branching trees he heard the unknown packings with restless impatience.

Presently he heard voices in conversation, and then a faint beam of light streamed into the log. He applied his eyes to the hole again, and in

SURE SHOT SETH



Dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground, Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman and Spy, listened.

the light of a pocket-lantern, saw four persons standing, and looking like Titan figures in the gloom.

Three of them Seth recognized as the notorious Sioux chiefs, Little Crow, Inkpaduta, and Little Priest. The fourth was a white man, whose long hair, broad-brimmed hat, peculiar garb, and general appearance were characteristic of no other class of men than the wealthy planters of the Southern States.

"So you have kept your appointment," said

the white man, raising the lantern and scanning each face before him with knitted brows.

"Little Crow is a great chief," said the redoubtable chief himself, "and never breaks his word with his friends."

The other two answered in the same words.

"I am glad to hear this, chiefs, for it gives me greater strength," replied the white man.

"I have come from the sunny land of the South to confer with my red brothers; are they ready to

listen?—are there no enemies' ears near us?"

"The trees have ears, and the wind sometimes tells secrets," answered Little Crow.

"Then you do not deem this a safe place to consult?"

"No; the night-jar screamed with affright, and shot into the sky when he passed near here. He is the spirit that warns the red-man when darkness hides dangers from his eyes. There are safer places than this to talk," replied the chief.

"Let my red brother select the safest place,

that the ears of our enemies may not hear what we say," said the white man.

"A brave waits by the river-side to take us in his canoe whither we desire to go. Let us seek the solitude and well-guarded shores of the island in the river below. There can we talk in safety, for no enemy's ear can cross the water."

"It is well, great chieftain," answered the white

plotter.

Disappointment clouded the face of the youth in the log as he heard the four emissaries of evil moving away. But his quick brain soon suggested a new course of action, and, creeping from the log, he rose to his feet and glided away through the darkness, going in the direction of the river, but keeping wide of the four enemies.

He reached the bank much in advance of them. Then he stole softly down the river until he came in sight of the Indian and canoe spoken of by Little Crow.

The warrior sat in the boat with his blanket drawn over his head. A rifle lay on the thwart at his side.

The prow of the canoe lay partly upon the beach.

The pale moon-beams, struggling downward through the darkness and mist, revealed all to the eyes of the young spy, as he crouched in the shadows near.

The keen ear of the savage boatman was on the alert. It detected a slight sound in the shrubbery. He started from his seat and fixed his eyes on the bushes before him. Then followed a "whirr"—a dull, sudden blow; a groan; the rush of feet; a splash in the water; the dip of a paddle, and the prow of a boat cleaving the waters.

The moon hid her face behind a cloud as if with shame; while the river flowed on as merrily as though its waters had not been stained with human blood.

CHAPTER II.

THE LONE ISLAND CONFERENCE.

SLOWLY toward the river Little Crow and his three companions made their way.

The moccasined feet of the savages trod as lightly as a panther's; but the tramp of the white man gave ample notice of his approach. The red-skins glided under and around the brush that disputed their way, but, like an ox, their companion crashed his way through, much to their annoyance.

Finally they reached the river-bank a few rods above the canoe.

The moon uncovered her face and looked to earth once more.

The dip of a paddle arrested the Indians' ears. Out upon the river Little Crow saw his boatman seated in the canoe, toying with the paddle. His head and shoulders were covered with his red and blue plaid.

No chief called to him. He headed the canoe ashore. As the prow touched upon the beach Little Crow courteously bade his white friend enter it.

The white man stepped into the craft, advanced and seated himself.

The boat was a long, slender affair, made of a log. The paddler occupied the stern; the white man a seat next; Little Crow third, and Inkpaduta the prow.

"Let Serleque head for the island below," said Little Crow, in a low tone.

Without a word the paddle dipped, the boat backed out from the shore, swung its long prow around, and then under the skillful management of Serleque, glided away down the stream.

Silence sealed the lips of the party. The white man gazed around him with a wild look of admiration upon his face. The moonbeams struggling through the white mist rendered objects weird and somber. The dark woods on either side rose up like the black walls of a mountain pass. Now and then a night-jar screamed overhead. The rolling waters surged and gurgled under and around them.

Light flashed from the dipping paddle in the moonbeams—light was its fall in the placid water.

Swiftly onward through the waves glided the craft. In a few minutes more the island was reached. Inkpaduta, followed by Little Priest, Little Crow and the white man, landed. The boatman swung his boat alongside the little sand-bar, laid down his paddle and drew his blanket closer around his head.

The island was not over a rod in width by two in length. It was a barren sand-bar, yet well guarded by the waves on either side.

Little Crow spread his blanket upon the ground and invited the white man to be seated upon it. Then the chief sat down opposite him, while the other two chiefs sat down one upon the right and one upon the left.

"Let our white brother speak, for we are now safe," said Little Crow.

The white man at once opened the conference; he represented himself as an agent of the Southern Confederacy, then waging war against the Union. He claimed that he had been sent North to effect terms of compromise with the Sioux under Little Crow and enlist their aid in battling their enemies, to establish their independence in case victory crowned their arms. The chiefs listened closely to the propositions of the Southern agent, and after the latter had concluded, Little Crow arose and delivered a warm and eloquent speech. He set forth the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the government, and expressed a belief that their grievances would justify them in taking up arms. He did not come to a final decision, however, until Inkpaduta and Little Priest had expressed themselves on the subject.

When they had, and he found they favored the agent's views, the great Sioux chief at once entered into an article of agreement with the agent to assist them in their battle against the Union. Even the very day and hour upon which the Indian massacre so prominent on the pages of history, was to begin, were agreed upon by the chiefs and the agent before the conference ended.

Altogether, an hour was consumed by these four arch-plotters, and finally they rose to depart. As they turned toward the boat, a cry of surprise burst from their lips. The boat had left the island and was half-way across to the shore.

Little Crow called to his boatman, but the latter made no reply. He pushed on and soon entered the border of shadows along the shore.

Then he permitted the mantle that enveloped his head and shoulders to fall to his feet, while a low, silent peal of laughter escaped his lips.

The boatman was Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Spy, not the Indian, as Little Crow believed.

From his covert in the woods had Seth hurled

a stone and stricken the Indian boatman down. The boy, tared the body overboard, enveloped himself in the savage's blanket, turned the boat away from the scene of the tragedy and paddled along the shore up-stream until hailed by the chief coming down. And in this manner, the young spy possessed himself of the secret plot so soon to deluge the land in blood.

CHAPTER III.

SURE SHOT SETH turned and glanced back toward the island. He could see the four forms upon it, and hear the chief calling to Serique, his boatman. Taking up his rifle from its concealment under the seat, he examined its priming, and was about to try a shot at one of the plotters when a sound in the water arrested his attention.

The gazed downward and to his horror beheld a man's face peering up at him from the side of the boat. It was an Indian's face—the face of Serique, the boatman! He had recovered from the blow he had received at the hands of the young spy, and was there to seek revenge. He stood in the water to his waist, and the instant his eyes met those of his foe, he threw up his hands and seized hold of the boat.

Seth saw, at a glance, that the savage had an advantage to begin with; and the first thing the youth did was to place his finger to his lips and utter a shrill, piercing whistle that fairly started the savage as its intonations quivered through the air.

Instantly, almost, it was answered in a similar manner from back of the hills, and then the savage knew that the young pale-face had friends near. But, not to be thwarted in his plans of vengeance, he rocked the canoe violently and pitched Seth out into the water. Then the two grappled in a deadly struggle—the red-skin and the white—the man and the boy. The former uttered a yell of savage fury, the latter a shout of defiance.

Although he was weak from recent loss of blood, the savage had no idea but that he could easily vanquish his youthful enemy; but the moment they grappled he found he had reckoned without his host, for the boy not only was possessed of wonderful strength, but the agility of a panther.

The red-skin had no weapons save those that nature gave him, Seth having deprived him of his knife and hatchet at the time of throwing him overboard. And his young adversary was no better provided, owing to the suddenness in which the conflict had been brought about; consequently the fight was confined to skill, strength and endurance. Seth made one or two attempts to draw his knife, and finally succeeded, but before he could use it, he was forced into such a position that he was compelled to drop it. This left him no recourse save to use his bare hands.

Up to this point for the youth the course of action gravitated toward the center of the river, which fact gave the enemy another advantage in consequence of his height and the depth of the water. But brave, desperate and determined the lad struggled manfully, heroically, to save the savage all he wanted to do. Their flying arms and feet beat and churned the water to a foam around them, as in rapid evolutions they whirled and spun to and fro in every direction.

At times they would sink from view, the water boiling and surging over them, then pop up perhaps a rod from where they sunk, puffing and blowing like a sheet exploded. At other times they would cease their struggle for a moment to rest, but never relinquishing the hold upon each other.

During one of these lulls in the conflict, half a dozen shadowy figures glided from the woods, and pausing on the shore glanced up and down the stream. Then a voice called:

"Seth? Seth? where are you?"
"Here in a—"

The rest of the sentence was lost in the savage's yell and the renewal of the conflict.

"Boys," cried one of the party upon the shore, "Sure Shot is in peril."

"Yes!" responded the others.

"Beaver," said the first speaker, "that is your element—"

The lad addressed as Beaver uttered the peculiar cry of the fur-bearing animal of that name; then, divesting himself of his outer clothing, plunged into the water and struck out toward the struggling foes.

By this time Seth and the Indian had drifted out into the middle of the river, where the current was swift and strong. The element was an enemy that was no respecter of persons, and not only proved a great annoyance to the combatants, but threatened the lives of both, for they were under water a good portion of the time.

Beaver swam rapidly, with much ease apparently, through the water was his home. When within a few rods of Seth and his antagonist when they rose to the surface from a long submersion, and to encourage his friend, he shouted:

"Brace up, Sure Shot; brace up, for I'm coming," and ended with the sharp, piercing cry of the animal after which he had been named.

For a few moments they struggled in the swiftest part of the current; then spun rapidly across to the opposite shore, and disappeared among the hanging network of roots, laid bare by the wash of the waves. The Beaver knew they were in the hands of the Indians; but they were in blinding darkness. However, he was about to follow to the scene of conflict when he saw a dozen savage forms appear on the bank just over the combatants, and he was compelled to change his mind. He remained perfectly still on the waves and watched. They walked to the edge of the bank and looked over, but not seeing the foes, one of them dropped himself down into the river and crept under the bank to his friend's assistance.

The next moment a cry of agony issued from under the bank; then all became still.

The battle was ended, but who had been the victor?

The Beaver, slowly drifting down the river unseen by the savages, held his breath in suspense. The next moment a figure crept out from under the bank, and climbing up into the moonlight, brandished aloft a human scalp, at the same time uttering a fierce, triumphant war-whoop.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRONG SCALP AND THE BOY BRIGADE. The Beaver drifted slowly down the river beyond danger, then sought the shore and his companions.

"Boys," he said, sad and heavy-hearted, "our gallant young leader is gone. The accused savages were too much for him. Poor Seth! his scalp is the first of the long-threatened troubles."

A groan of the deepest anguish was wrung from the lips of each of the little band of youths—followers of Sure Shot Seth. Dearly they loved their young leader, and his death fell heavily upon their young hearts. But, all that was now left for them to do was to search out the body, give it a respectful burial, and go with sad and heavy hearts with the duties of life from about the camp.

"Serge, boys!" exclaimed one of the party, and the next moment all disappeared like a shadow before a burst of sunshine.

A savage yell rung through the forest—a yell, the like of which had not been heard for a long time in that region.

It was a blood-curdling war-whoop!

Away through the forest like hounds glided the shadowy forms of the savages, their treacherous hearts thirsting for human blood.

Here and there, every boy taking care of himself, glided the followers of Sure Shot Seth. With the silence of panthers they crept among the bushes, dodged around the trees and rocks,

and stole onward through the woods and darkness.

Suddenly the sharp bark of a fox broke upon the night. One of the fleeing youths started as though a bullet had whistled past his ears. He stopped, bent his head and listened. Again the barking of the fox broke upon his ears. A smile of happy surprise burst over his face, and clear and distinct he sent forth an exact imitation of the sound he had heard. Then he glided away in the direction whence the barking had emanated. He moved briskly, yet with silence, keeping the one course in a "bee-line." He had gone nearly a hundred yards when a low voice halted him.

"Hullo; is it you, Reynard?"

"Great heavens!" was the excited answer, "do my ears deceive me? or do I hear the voice of Sure Shot Seth?"

"I am here, Reynard," was the response, and Sure Shot Seth stepped from a cluster of bushes and confronted his friend.

"Well, by the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Reynard, "there's a big mistake somewhere. Why, Seth, we mourned you as dead. That savage flattered us a scalps aloft when he came from under the bank and uttered a triumphant scalping."

"I know he did the deluded fool; but the fact is, he took the scalp of a friend. He succeeded in getting his knife out just as I discovered that a second red-skin had appeared on the scene, and by a sudden movement I brought my enemy into such a position as to receive the knife of his friend in his heart. The savage knew not but that it was me, and fearing off his scalp, rushed out and climbed up the bank in great glee with a comrade's scalp, leaving me to make my way out at leisure. But are the other boys about, Reynard?"

"Good for the wild Irishman," exclaimed his companions, when, with a sudden movement, he turned a summersault and came up on a seat at the opposite side of the room.

"Och, and a broth av a b'y was me aged on a jig; and Begorra, the gift came down through the whole government of O'Ropes with various movements. But, giv a mab, b'y somethin' to rouse the blood that fit at Bunker's Hill—somethin' military—that's a mortal moosic, that's the jigger."

All acquiesced, and from the Indian lad, Le Subtil Wolf, having been placed on guard outside, Tom Trick took down the fiddle and Sure-Shot Seth the harp.

The first named led off with a sprightly air, and when Seth struck up the cabin fairly trembled under the violent strains of music. The Whippowil became inspired by the ravishing notes, and, springing to his feet, executed a dance that greatly increased the interest of the moment.

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Tim Tricks and Seth were both fine musicians, and, in accordance with the Whippowil's request, struck up the "Grand Russian March," much to the delight of their auditors.

The music swelled out in enchanting melody, and, with its varying notes, the blood of the youths glided through their veins in symphony with the soul-stirring strains.

The scene was one seldom met with under similar circumstances. In the flickering, changing light dancing over the walls the deer-birds and animals of the woods, the noble birds of these trapper boys seemed aquiver with life and ready to start from their perch, enchanted by the music.

The youthful faces of the lads glowed with the emotions stirred within their breasts, and their senses seemed floating away on the ravishing sounds called forth by the skillful hands of the performers. But in the midst of all, while every mind was diverted from the cares of the outside world, and absorbed in the sweet melody of music, a dark body suddenly burst through the curtains, and the terrible hand of these trapper boys seemed to have

reached him with joy.

"Blessed Virgin!" exclaimed the youth in the Celtic brogue, "and, bedad, and I'm glad to mate ye, Seth, me b'y."

The three soon relapsed into silence; then Seth uttered a cry like that of a beaver, and was soon answered in a similar manner. A few moments afterward, the lad, Beaver, who had swum to Seth's assistance, joined the group, beside himself with joy.

Then Seth sent forth the hoot of an owl, the hoot of a wolf, and the scream of a panther; and, in answering the calls, three more youths made their appearance, and joined the group.

"Ay, Friend Whippowil!" cried Seth, exclaiming.

The last two words whistled from his lips in an exact imitation of that night-bird, whose peculiar song seems very plainly to articulate the syllables which compose its own name. A moment later a similar answer was given; and still a few moments later, a figure emerged from the shadows in the little opening where Seth and Reynard stood in waiting.

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"Ay, Friend Whippowil!" cried Seth, exclaiming.

The last two words whistled from his lips in an exact imitation of that night-bird, whose peculiar song seems very plainly to articulate the syllables which compose its own name. A moment later a similar answer was given

he succeeded in disposing of the claim at his own figures. Great was his exultation, loud his boasting for a few days; but then the laugh changed sides. The buyers set to steady work, and within the week developed one of the richest "strikes" in the vicinity, clearing from six to eight ounces of gold per day. Cursing his folly, Gin Cocktail tried hard to go back of his bargain, but in vain. He, himself, had caused the papers to be drawn up so as to leave no loophole for the escape of his supposed "sardines," and bitterly enough he regretted it now. But he could do nothing.

Gin Cocktail kept close to his covert, only stealing out once to "confiscate" some bacon and hard tack from the stock of a devotee of the drama, whom he felt confident would be at the Temple. Succeeding in this, and provided with a jug full of water, he bore his enforced confinement as well as could be expected.

From this refuge he overheard the disturbance at the Temple, the running fight maintained by Red Pepper, and the wild excitement that followed. In the gray light of dawn he saw the vigilantes, under leadership of Bart Noble, ride rapidly away in the direction of Diamond Gulch. As the day progressed, he saw that the town was almost completely deserted, and as his wounds and bruises tingled under the noonday glare, a bold plan gradually shaped itself in his mind. The cabin of the Kendalls lay to his left, not a quarter of a mile distant, alone, since the nearest building was hundreds of yards away.

"I'll do it or bust!" he muttered, a wicked devil in his eye. "He ain't been to the spress office for months. They've bin makin' big wages—an' it's mine by good rights, any way. He went 'long o' them fellers, 'most likely. She'll be alone—twon't be a hard job. Ef I kin only git my hands on the gold—I'll soon settle her! They won't nobody 'spicion me. They think I pockacheet, hot foot. They'll lay it to some o' those dirty greasers. Yes, I kin do it—an' I will, too!"

Lying upon his stomach—a sitting posture was not favorite with Gin Cocktail, just then—his eyes fixed upon the lone cabin, the bummer carefully formed his diabolical plot. He believed its execution would be easy, and accompanied by little real danger. If Sneaky had gone, as he firmly believed, since he could see that no one was working at the claim—then there was only the girl to deal with. And the devilish light that filled his eyes whenever he caught a glimpse of her light, graceful form—now clad in the garments suitable for her sex—told plainly enough how little mercy she need expect at his hands.

A dread lest the vigilantes should return and thus frustrate his plans, caused Gin Cocktail to leave his covert earlier than he would otherwise have dared. The men had scarce disappeared an hour when he stole cautiously down the hill toward the lone cabin. A burning longing for revenge, together with the hope of making a rich haul of gold, deadened his pains, and the bummer betrayed no stiffness nor deafness as he neared the shanty.

Creeping forward, keeping in the darkest shade, he gained the cabin wall undiscovered. All was silent within. There were no lights burning. Evidently Josie had gone to bed, just what he had calculated upon. He cautiously tried the door, then the one wooden-shuttered window; but each and all were fastened from within.

A grating curse told that he had not counted upon this, still, at the same time, it convinced him that Josie was alone within the cabin. He knew that Sneaky's bunk lay directly beneath the window, which was usually left ajar, to admit the cool, fresh air.

"Jest my durned crooked luck!" snarled the bummer, spitefully. "Wa-al, ef I can't git the dust, I'll hev my revenge, anyhow, ef I die for't!"

The cabin was a frail one, built of pine and cedar poles, the interstices being filled with moss and dried grass, the whole thatched with layers of bark for shingles. Beneath the sultry sun, these materials had become dry as tinder, so inflammable that a spark would be enough to insure its destruction.

None knew this better than Gin Cocktail, since he had occupied the cabin for several weeks. And, guided by this knowledge, he lost no time in carrying out his devilish project. Gathering an armful of dried grass and leaves, mingled with twigs and pine-knots, he built four separate piles, one at each side of the cabin, then striking a match he ignited a wisp of hay, running rapidly from one pile to another until the four were blazing freely. Then, with revolver in hand, he crouched down in a clump of bushes, some twenty yards from the cabin. From this covert he could command the window and one of the doors. At both of the latter he had started fires, and already he could see that the growing flames had fastened upon the pitch-pine slabs.

As stated in a previous chapter, the cabin was situated in a narrow valley, and a bend in the hollow shut off all view of the town. Thus Gin Cocktail had little cause to fear interruption from that direction, at least until the increasing glow should awaken suspicion.

Eagerly he awaited the result, his eyes glowing, his tongue licking his dry, parched lips, his skinny face fairly hideous with a Satanic glee. He could see that the cabin was fairly afire, the pitch-pine poles burning furiously. The most chinking dropped out in blazing flakes. The forked tongues of fire were reaching far into the interior. And then his gaze concentrated upon the window, as he saw that the door was a blazing furnace through which no living thing could pass.

"Ha! ha! now she feels it!" he laughed, as a half-stifled shriek came from within the cabin. "Now it touches her—now it's spoiling her baby face! Ha! h—!" he grated, fiercely, "she'll git away, arter all!"

He heard a rattling crash within, and then the wooden shutter was flung open, with a jar. Through the flame-tinted smoke a pale, terrified face appeared at the opening. It was that of Jessie Kendall.

The assassin saw that she would escape his devilish snare, unless speedily prevented. The opening was ample large enough to permit her crawling out, and at this side of the building the flames were fiercest by the door. Instantly his resolve was taken. He had already dared too much to falter now, and, rising up in his covert, he raised his revolver, crying aloud:

"Go back—I'll blow yer brains out of ya don't go back!"

Josie saw the threatening figure, heard the menacing words, but, instead of obeying, she struggled still further through the window, uttering a shrill, piercing cry for help.

With another curse, the assassin raised his pistol and fired. But the bullet sped wide of his intended victim.

The maiden's cry for aid was not unheeded. A figure was already hastening to her rescue, and was close behind Gin Cocktail when he uttered his fierce threat. Rising into the air, the figure leaped forward, striking heavily against the murderer, hurling him to the ground with stunning force, just as his pistol exploded.

As though under the same impulse the leap was repeated, and then the rescuer darted on to the cabin, just in time to catch the half-senseless maiden in his arms.

"Thank God! darling, I was in time!" he cried, pressing his lips to hers, as he drew his precious burden away from the intense heat. "But am I—you are not injured?" he added, fearfully, as he received no reply.

At this moment a horseman galloped up, and leaping to the ground, confronted him, with drawn pistol.

"You here, Bush! what does all this mean?" cried Little Cassino, for he was who last appeared.

"It means murder—a man was trying to shoot her as I came up—yonder he lies," hastily replied the rescuer.

"I saw the light and hastened up, but you were too quick for me. A dying man, too! Turned doctor—they were trying to restore her *yer breath, wasn't you?*" with a hard, unnatural laugh.

"I have known her for months, doctor," quietly replied Bush—the young miner whom we saw lying wounded at the "Mint." "Never mind how I found out, but I knew who 'Soft Tommy' was all along, and she has promised to be my wife."

"I'm glad to hear it, Tipton," was the warm reply. "You're well worthy her love, and I can't say more than that, though I tried a year. But she's coming to. You'd better wrap this blanket around her. Young girls are sometimes bashful about appearing before their lovers in such scant attire—though she has no cause to be afraid," smiled Little Cassino, taking a blanket from the croup of his horse and passing it to Bush Tipton.

Then he turned to where the baffled assassin lay, not having stirred a member since that second deadly jump. The young miner had alighted fairily upon the neck and head of Gin Cocktail, breaking the fall and crushing in the other with his heavy iron-shod heels.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A VICTIM OF JEALOUSY.

MEANTIME, what fate had befallen Estelle Mack, the wife of the ill-fated gymnast? To explain her, as yet, enigmatical disappearance, the reader must go back to the Temple on the evening when Red Pepper abducted Zoe, instead of the game Big George set him at.

Only for his stumble and fall over the body of Little Cassino at the door of the green-room, the desperado would doubtless have succeeded in his bold attempt. But, as he fell, Estelle slipped from his grasp and fled from him, into the green-room, the only avenue of escape left open. The darkness aided her in so far that Red Pepper seized one of the ballet girls in her stead, nor discovered his mistake until hours later.

But, if favored by fortune in this respect, poor Estelle was to fall victim to a scarcely less diabolical plot. In the darkness she ran against some person, uttering a little cry of terror at the contact. A voice called her by name—a voice that she readily recognized. She replied, with just what words she never knew. But it was sufficient, since her voice plainly declared her identity, and instantly a pair of soft, warm arms wound around her trembling form.

"Come with me—hasten! He is hunting for you—he will murder you if he finds you now! Hasten—for the love of Our Mother! hasten!"

The voice was that of a woman, eager yet guarded, and audible only to the ears of Estelle above the wild uproar and trampling with which the wooden walls resounded. Never dreaming of treachery—why should she?—Estelle followed the woman. Across the room, through a low, triangular opening in one corner, now creeping, groping their way blindly through a maze of rough beams and scantlings, progressing with wonderful ease and certainty considering the obstacles; it was as though the woman-guide possessed the visual powers of a cat. At length she paused, pushing aside a short plank and stepping through into a small, dimly-lighted dressing-room.

"There—you are safe here; no one can touch you now," spoke the woman, as she pulled Estelle after her and slipped the plank into place again.

"Let me go—I must find him—George—George—they are murdering him!" gasped Estelle, brushing the hair back from her eyes and glancing wildly around her.

At her words an almost terrifying change passed over the other woman's countenance. Naturally beautiful, though of a brilliant passionate type, a *brune* in whose veins coursed the hot blood of the sun-lands, her face now became dark and frowning, a menacing light in her eyes. As though aware of this fact and lest her intended victim should take the alarm and escape her toils after all, she averted her head, bending over a trunk as she spoke.

"One moment and we will go. But you are ill—fainting! Smell this; it will give you strength—ah—ha!"

She moved swiftly toward Estelle, a crumpled handkerchief in hand. Bewildered, dazed though she was, Estelle detected the cloying odor of chloroform, and started back, but ere she could raise her voice, that the form was upon her, bearing her back, pressing the drugged cloth to her nostrils, holding it firmly in place until the girl-wife's struggles ceased and her body hung limply across the arm of the traitress.

A low, mocking laugh parted the lips of the Mexican as she allowed her victim to sink to the floor, flinging the tell-tale handkerchief back into her trunk and closing the lid.

"So!" she hissed, standing over the senseless girl, tapping the pale lips with one tiny satin-slipped foot. "So; you will cross my path and then laugh at poor Paquita because she likes not your soft smiles and sweet looks upon her lover! You will step on my heart—like my footsteps on your lips—you will laugh and coquet with him—with my Feluco, eh! No—not any more. My time it is now! I laugh at you—I bruise your baby lips—I spit upon you—ha! ha! I, Paquita—I do this!"

A beautiful, brilliant demon she appeared as she gave full vent to her wild jealousy, but the transport quickly ended. She heard the voice of the manager, Ben Coffee, calling aloud the name of Estelle. There was yet danger of discovery, and to guard against this was her first move.

She dragged the body of her victim into the further corner, rolled the heavy trunk close up against it, then piled clothes over all, drawing a long breath of relief as she drew back and assured herself that all was hidden from view, unless a close search was instituted. Then, knowing that the drug administered was powerful enough to insure her victim's silence for hours, Paquita left the room, locking the door, and hastened along the passage leading to the stage.

She reached this in time to hear the dying words of the young gymnast. Affecting as was the scene, it failed to touch her heart. She only regretted that Estelle was for the time being insensible to the magnitude of her loss.

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Will Have It!—A lady subscriber in Lake City, Florida, writes: "Rest assured that I will never cease to be a subscriber to the SATURDAY JOURNAL as long as I can get a dollar. Would sooner go without a new dress than to miss getting the dear old JOURNAL. A cousin of mine and myself had quite a controversy over the paper and its merits as compared with the other weeklies, and both mother and sister joined in with me in standing up for the JOURNAL. With three such advocates cousin had of course to give up, and now having tried the JOURNAL is of our own minds." The JOURNAL is always pleased to have its merits contrasted with that of the other weeklies, week by week, and we wish our friends, like the above correspondent, would make the relative merits of the popular weeklies a subject of discussion.

Sunshine Papers.

Foreign and American.

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,

This is my native land;
Whose heart hath no thorn, whose bosom no burn'd,

From wandering on a foreign strand?

So asked Scott; and it was all very well for him to do so, seeing that he was an Englishman. One of the elementary forces of the British nature is its unbounded adoration of its own country and nationality. A true representative of Johnny Bull thinks the highest blessing ever bestowed upon a mortal is the being born in England; and the Frenchman believes there is no land like his sunny France; the Italian worships his Italy; Russians love their forests, and wastes, and broad dominion; the Japanese are jealous only to their island kingdom; and no doubt the Esquimaux prefers his eternal snows to any home in the most seductive climate. But where, oh! where, shall we find the American who has the same idolatrous love for his country? Who thinks it is a glorious birthright to have been born in the United States? Who asserts, with the pride of a Webster, "I was born an American; I live an American; I shall die an American?" Whose loyalty finds expression in the old toast of Decatur, "Our country; our country, right or wrong!" Whose heart within him burns as home his footsteps he hath turned from wandering on a foreign strand?

The truth is, admiration of our own country is not just the style with us Americans. We do not like to be reminded that we were a short time ago petty colonies; and that our grand-dames drank herb tea and spun their own linen; and that our grandfathers wore garments made of homemade cloth; and that a Charles Dickens came here and made fun of us, and said of our villages that they looked as if they had all sprung up in the night, reminding one of mushrooms; and that by some other of our self-complacent friends across the seas we are believed to be very crude, and young, and ignorant, and uncultured. We are apt to forget that we have made more rapid progress in the century of our existence as a separate and distinct nationality than other peoples have in double the time. We forget that our skilled labor, and mechanisms, and manufactures in most branches, can already compete, successfully with those of any known nation, in races where "the whole world come to run for the crown;" that our conveyances and systems of traveling are the most elegant, commodious, and complete known; that our people, en masse, are more thrifty, intelligent and bet-

ter educated than any other; that wealth and culture, among us, is a rule rather than an exception confined to an exclusive few, who inherit such by accident of birth; that our women are universally admitted to exceed those of any land in their combined attractions of being beautiful, graceful, artistically dressed, self-possessed, and well read; that we have come victorious out of every conflict in which we have engaged; that we hold the power to place ourselves first in the naval and commercial world; that we combine within our wonderful extent of territory every known climate and mineral resource; that we can row and shoot with the athletes of the world; and that, greatest and best of all, we are free, free, free!

Not only may it be said of every American his "soul is his own," but he owes no duty to a king—though I'm not sure that some of us would not admire to do so, judging by the enthusiastic adulation we bestow on every mustached and titled stranger who comes to see if Americans "are all white," and whether they know how to eat, and sleep, and talk, like other civilized tribes. To be sure, just now, we are making quite a time over our Centennial celebrations; though even concerning that there may be found Americans who will tell you contemptuously, "Oh, I am not particular about visiting the Centennial Exhibition; I've attended the Vienna Exposition, and of course this cannot compare with it!" But, notwithstanding this little furor of national pride and aggrandizement, we still retain a sublime passion for aping foreign fashions and manners. To do just as is done abroad is a manner with a large class of Americans.

Our dresses must be cut by French patterns; our hats must be labeled "imported," and our new fabrics must have unpronounceable foreign names. We no longer employ a "dressmaker," but we patronize Mademoiselle Fussy, and Madame Fifty, importers of Parisian modes. We wear English walking hats, French turbans, or the Princess, Marquise, Warwick, Bayonne, Arlington, or West End. If our gentlemen twirl a cane, they must feel positive that its mate, at that identical moment, is being twirled in Paris; they call on their tailors for English suits, French smoking jackets, Russian cloaks; they wear Lord Byron, Czar, and Piccadilly collars and cuffs; they smoke Spanish cigars, part their hair in Paris style, their whiskers in English style, and affect a German diet; they put a glass in one eye and declare, with copied British drawl, "By Jove! awful nice girl that!" or, "Jove! it's such a deuced bore, don't you know?"

American girls make "nice" and "nasty," and "jolly," their pet adjectives because it is "Englishy" and raw over Palais Royal jewelry, or a new arrangement of the hair, because it is "Frenchy." And, in fact, the highest ambition of the average modern American young person is, some time, to visit his particular heaven—Paris!

For his valuable services in furnishing weekly poetry to the village paper, the readers of that sheet presented him an elegantly bound spelling-book, and he could not find words enough in the whole book to express his thankfulness. He used to pore over that book until he got poor him, and treasured it all his life. But it never struck in much.

For an agricultural essay he was presented with a very fine beet. Perhaps owing to the delay it had died, but the fact of its being a dead beat did not lessen its character as a testimonial, and he kept it dried. He cherished it as his *bête noir*, if you know what that is. He always took an unbound and unsewed interest in other people's business, not because he ever made any money out of it, for he rather lost by it when he would come to foot up the profit and loss, but because he rather felt that he could manage theirs better than his own, and the Other People got together one day, and in a praiseworthy speech presented him with a well-deserved medal, as being the most meddlesome man in the town. He generally laid it away among the other archives of his eventful career.

He wrote a history of the United States which was considered very remarkable. It was totally unlike any other history, because he maintained there was nothing like originality in any literary production, and was presented by the Historical Society, of which he would have been a member if it had not been from a mistake made in the color of the ballots, with (they not having any other testimonial on hand just then) an aged goose, which he afterward kept in his own room, stuffed, and showed with pride.

He is well cultivated and possesses as much knowledge as their city neighbors. Railroads now are plentiful and newspapers and magazines abound. People can read as much and as understandingly in country as in city, and the brain can be cultivated as well as the soil.

Country people are hospitable and generous, else the tramps would not leave the city to wander in the country. Their ears are ever open to the cry of distress and their hands are never closed to alivitiae it. This kindness, generosity and charity are often imposed upon, but they seem to prefer to aid all who call, for there must be some deserving creatures in the midst of so many who are destitute.

If you are in trouble how many and many will aid you! Among country people there seems to be one bond of fraternal friendship. If Farmer John's barn is burned the neighbors will all turn out at the "raising" of a new one. If Farmer Tom is kept from work by sickness, his neighbors will cut down his trees for him, saw and split the wood for him, and they'll not send him in a heavy bill for their services. Do as you would be done by seems to be their motto, and well and nobly they act up to it.

Country people are thoughtful of others' comfort; for you will find by the pump or by the "old oaken bucket" a tin or dipper that the tired traveler or weary wayfarer may refresh himself. And the dipper is not chained to the well or pump lest any one should steal it. Country folks can form no conception of a person who would be so base as to take the dipper after having a refreshing draught; it would be as bad as for a person to rob the pocket of a man who had saved him from drowning.

The quiet ways of country people have a charm about them that pleases you. They seem to glide along smoothly and grow old gradually, so gradually as to be almost imperceptible. The early hours they keep invigilant over them and prolongs their lives. Most of their wealth lies in the product of their land and they take an honest pride in cultivating it. Living so much among the works of Nature as they do, they are more apt to look up to Nature's God and thank Him for His benefits. It doesn't seem to me that a lover of Nature can be an atheist. Where God's handiwork is all round him he must acknowledge that this handiwork is not the work of chance.

There is not so much difference of *caste* in the country, not so much prating about the pride of noble birth. Thus the country people are sociable and neighborly. They live among themselves, and, when business causes them to go away, they still remember the dear

old home and its associations, and long for the time when they shall return.

God bless the country and God bless those that dwell in it! May the country people remain as unostentatious as they now are, and they will be happy. The massive monument does not seem to spurn the slate headstone in the graveyard. As equal in life so they are equal in death and equal in the great "land of the hereafter."

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolscap Papers.

A Man of Great Presents.

One of my uncles, Mr. Caleb G. Whitehorn, Esquire, as he used to serenely write his name on due bills, was a very peculiar man in his way; in fact was one of our most distant relatives—so distant, indeed, that he was away beyond speaking to any others of the family, and, like every one else of the family, he held himself away above the rest, thereby to preserve the integrity of the race. By fitting into every great movement of the day, and putting his head to it and frequently putting his foot into it, he got to be quite a prominent character, in his way.

He was the recipient of very numerous testimonials from great men, and others which of course, although he prided in them, did not exalt him any more in his own mind, from the fact that he was already exalted so high in his own estimation that it was impossible to go any higher. Nevertheless he was a harmless individual, and perfectly willing to pay his way in the world as he went along, provided he didn't want to use his money for any other purpose.

Among the many presents which he received I find in looking over his diary the first was a switch by his affectionate father, who generally presented it with a neat speech, and as Caleb received it he was generally loud in applause. The old man only presented him with one end of the switch, however, and it used to tangle his legs up a good deal to carry that end.

When a young man, he was presented by the literary society of his place, of which he was a member, with a gourd. Oh, it was a beautiful gourd, one of the very finest in the country, and had received the premium at the fair. It was such a nice present and it tickled him so much that it was difficult to restrain him from having it made right up into pumpkin pie on the spot. It beat all the gourds that ever were gored. It was such a beautiful, beautiful thing. He returned many thanks—but kept the gourd.

For his valuable services in furnishing weekly poetry to the village paper, the readers of that sheet presented him an elegantly bound spelling-book, and he could not find words enough in the whole book to express his thankfulness. He used to pore over that book until he got poor him, and treasured it all his life. But it never struck in much.

For an agricultural essay he was presented with a very fine beet. Perhaps owing to the delay it had died, but the fact of its being a dead beat did not lessen its character as a testimonial, and he kept it dried. He cherished it as his *bête noir*, if you know what that is.

He always took an unbound and unsewed interest in other people's business, not because he ever made any money out of it, for he rather lost by it when he would come to foot up the profit and loss, but because he rather felt that he could manage theirs better than his own, and the Other People got together one day, and in a praiseworthy speech presented him with a well-deserved medal, as being the most meddlesome man in the town. He generally laid it away among the other archives of his eventful career.

He wrote a history of the United States which was considered very remarkable. It was totally unlike any other history, because he maintained there was nothing like originality in any literary production, and was presented by the Historical Society, of which he would have been a member if it had not been from a mistake made in the color of the ballots, with (they not having any other testimonial on hand just then) an aged goose, which he afterward kept in his own room, stuffed, and showed with pride.

For his able efforts in trying to get out of paying honest debts, and the invention of new and plausible excuses, at a convention of down-trodden but sensitive debtors, he was presented with a very large purse as an appreciation of his services in his diary, "but there was nothing in the purse."

For his earnest endeavors in trying to organize a society for the prevention of cruelty to old clothes, for which he showed till the day of his death an unflattering devotion, he was presented by his friends with an elegant and valuable box of scented toilet soap, and so highly did he value the gift, he preserved every case of it religiously, and never upon any occasion would he use any of it. It was one of his best.

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For his services in trying to get out

A LONGING—WITH COMMENTS.

BY HARVEY HOWARD.

"Oh! had you the wings of an eagle you'd fly
Through the sweet, dewy morning air up to the sky;

Far from the wranglings and strife of the earth,
Where the sweet stars have their hallowed birth;

Where the stern hand of the death-angel never
Swings his sharp scythe, from a loved one to sever;

Where the dust and the heat of the world below,
And the withered flowers of the earth cannot go;

Where the rose has no thorn; where the bee has
No honey to give;

As he hums his sweet music on gossamer wing;
Where the smile has no frown, and the song has
no sigh;

Where the gleam has no gloom, and the laughter
no cry;

Where the light never chases the darkness away,
For the night is as bright and as fair as the day!"

I ask not the wings of an eagle, to fly
Away from the earth to the blue dome on high;

I ask not for pinions to bear me away
From the land where the night but enhances the day;

Where the darkness but shows me there is a worse doom.

Than to have my bright gleam sometimes hid by
the gloom;

Than to live in the world where my brothers and I
Laugh all the more gayly because we must cry,

And smile all the brighter because we must weep,

And walk but the straighter because others creep;

Where the thorn but increases the scent of the flower;

And the weakness of youth lives to manhood his power.

I ask not for wings—I would just as soon stay,

To sleep the nighttime and work in the day.

And, suppose that the wings which you wish were
bestowed,

Who's going up with you to show you the road?

Who's going to leave all the joy that's below
To sail through the air like a wild crow?

Who's going to fly to to whom doesn't know where,

Because he has dreamed there is some place more
fair

Than this world of roses and lilies and things;

Even though, like buzzard, he's gifted with

I'll take none of your wings in mine, if you please
Unless it's a chicken's, along with green peas.

I may go to the land where the day never ends,

Where the sun never rises and never descends;

But I'll take my chances along with the rest;

And when the sun sets I'll go further west.

Great Adventurers.

ARCTIC EXPLORERS.

Searchers for a North-west Passage and for the
Nor' th Pole.

BY DR. LOUIS LEGRAND.

The recent return of the English Arctic expedition, to report the attempt to penetrate the supposed "Open Polar Sea" fruitless, adds another to the already long list of failures to unravel the great mystery of the North; and its assumption that there is no open polar sea, but that it is one solid mass of ice at least eighty feet thick over that most frigid region, again raises a discussion of the question—is there, as Dr. Kane asserted, open water all around the Pole? Dr. Hayes, after reading the English report, comes forward with a strong statement reaffirming his own and Dr. Kane's and Capt. Hall's discoveries in that remote and most desolate Northern Land, and what he says doubtless will impel other expeditions to try to penetrate the ice barrier that he believes surrounds an ocean of ever-moving water not less than one thousand miles in diameter. So the end of the long line of adventure, with its terrible peril, suffering and loss is not yet, and it may remain for American enterprise to solve the riddle that has baffled the skill of the most daring navigators for three hundred years.

The record of attempts to find the North-west Passage—to sail around the North American continent—is indeed full of brilliant names—Cabot, Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Behring, Baffin, Cook, in early days, and Ross, Parry, Scoresby, Franklin, Kane, McClintock, Hayes and Hall in recent years. The story of each one of these navigators forms a long and deeply-interesting chapter in the history of sea-adventure and exploration, and the gathered chapters make a volume of such rare value that we may very properly commend it to the notice of our friends and readers.

It has been stated, in our sketches of explorers already given, that the search was less for new lands than to try to find a passage through or around the "New World," by which to reach India and China—thus to save the long and dangerous passage around the continent of Africa. Hudson was sure he had struck it when he passed into the vast bay that now bears his name, and where he perished so miserably. But, all having failed, parliament inspired the search by offering a considerable reward to the successful discoverer. Davis cruised north and located the straits which bear his name in 1587; Baffin followed and went through these straits, in 1618, and explored Baffin's Bay as well as partially inspecting Lancaster Sound; Jones, Middleton, Ellis and others again investigated Hudson's Bay and its numerous "inlets"; then the Hudson's Bay Fur Company sent its men out from its stations to explore the north coast. In this way Capt. Mackenzie, in 1780. He first found and traced Mackenzie's river and Whale Island.

These discoveries only stimulated further investigations by the British government. It sent out Capt. Phipps, in 1773, to try and penetrate the open sea by way of Spitzbergen, but he was stopped by ice. Cook, in his attempt (1778) through Behring's Straits, as we have recorded, was not able to pass much beyond Icy Cape. But, all had failed in the exploration of the open polar sea; and Baffin, in his "History of Voyages into the Polar Regions," (London, 1818,) so firmly espouses the theory of open waters, practicable to navigation around both North America and the Eastern continent that the British government offered a prize of £20,000 sterling to the navigator who should really accomplish the North-west Passage, and of £5,000 sterling to the first vessel which should actually reach and pass the North Pole. And, to hasten the search, the Prince Regent, in 1819, offered prizes from £5,000 to £15,000 to vessels that should advance to certain named points in the Arctic Sea.

The British government, in 1818, fitted out two North Pole expeditions. One of two vessels, under Capt. Buchan, was to penetrate between Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla, and by passing over the Pole come out at Behring's Straits—thus running around the north of Greenland and North America. The other expedition of two vessels, under Capt. Ross, was to attempt the passage through Baffin's Bay, to reach the Pole and thence turn west to Behring's Straits. Both failed wholly to reach open water. Buchan came home the same year, having discovered nothing. Ross very carefully observed the west coast of Greenland up to 77° 40', but failed to find the north passage, and returned, late in the year. But these small results did not discourage the Government. In 1819 it started out Capt. Parry, with two fine vessels. He followed in Ross'

track, but trending west struck what he called Barrow's Straits, leading west, and wintered in what he named Melville Island. The next season he cruised around, locating Banks' Land—up to this day the most westerly land yet discovered in the Arctic Sea. He reached home safely in 1820—having more interesting discoveries to report than any voyager who had penetrated the Northern Sea. He was awarded the Prince Regent's highest prize.

Thus encouraged, Parry started again, in 1821, with two admirably equipped vessels, provisioned for a four years' voyage, with orders to examine the north of North America. Entering Hudson's Bay, he ran into its north inlets. Repulse Bay permitted no passage west—hence its name. Then Parry sailed and explored along two hundred miles of coast to the north, but returned to Repulse Bay to winter, with several Esquimaux families near at hand for company. The next year (1822) he sailed north again, and spent all summer in tracing the islands, headlands and waters of the Gulf of Boothia up to Melville Sound. The second winter was passed near his former quarters. The summer of 1823 was vainly passed in trying to reach the open waters to the north, and that fall he returned to England. He reported very fully on the fauna and flora of that region, and presented a large mass of astronomical, magnetic and geographical observations to the national archives, but the real object of the expedition was unaccomplished. The open Polar Sea was still a sealed mystery.

But the great land journey of Captain (afterward Sir John) Franklin was not the east memorable exploit of those years of active exertion. While Parry and Ross were cruising in the waters to the north of Davis Straits, Franklin was sent by the British Government to explore the north coast by land. He started from York, on Hudson's Bay, early in September, 1819, for Fort Providence, on Great Slave Lake, and from there struck off into the wilderness, but was forced into winter quarters by the severity of the weather and the utterly impassable barriers of snow, which kept him weather-bound for ten months. In the summer of 1821 he reached the Coppermine river, and on the last of July, at its mouth, sailed along the coast in the canoes his carriers had borne along with them. But he was unable to pursue the dangerous journey with such means, and returned, reaching a station of the Hudson's Bay Company at Moose-deer Island, Dec. 17th, in a most exhausted condition. July 14th, 1822, he arrived again at York. This land journey, of over 5,500 miles, was one of the most extraordinary in all the records of northern exploration.

In May, 1824, a Government expedition, under Parry, again went out, with two old vessels, but after a winter in Prince Regent's Bay the ships sailed southward, but the ice bergs caught both ships and they had a terrible tussle for life. Capt. Lyon's vessel, the Fury, was forced ashore and abandoned, and Parry's vessel, the Hecla, with both crews, worked its way out, and reached England in October.

Franklin, not intimidated by his sufferings in his first land journey, made another attempt to sail along the north coast in 1825, when, in company with Dr. Richardson, the naturalist, he reached the North Sea, near Garry Island; thence returned up the Mackenzie river, to his winter quarters on Great Bear Lake. In June, 1826, the two parties of Franklin and Richardson started north again. They separated, and by their united surveys succeeded in tracing the rock-bound coast of the Northern Ocean from the Coppermine to the Mackenzie. Both parties, after great exposure and fatigue, returned to Great Bear Lake, in safety, and thence home, to demonstrate the feasibility of a north passage along the coast, to Behring's Straits, during August, of each year.

But the North Pole was still the point of particular interest; and Parry, once more in the Hecla, started—this time for Spitzbergen.

There he kept his vessel, while with reindeer sledges and boats he endeavored to reach the North Pole by journeying over the ice. He journeyed for thirty-five days northward through rain and sleet, and then found the ice so broken and drifting to the southward that he had to turn back, and after sixty-one days' absence, boarded his vessel again.

It was a singular fact that Parry and Franklin both reached the Admiralty office, in London, on the same day, within one-half hour of each other—Sept. 29th, 1827.

The next voyage—a private adventure by Capt. Ross—was one of singular adventure, peril and suffering. In the spring of 1829, Ross started for the scene of Parry's discoveries to find a new passage by way of Prince Regent's Inlet. He left Greenland, where he had resided, July 27th, and nothing more was heard of him until he and his men were picked up, in August, 1833, by the ship Isabella, at the entrance of Lancaster Sound.

Ross' story was painfully interesting and exciting. After leaving Greenland, the vessel sailed, with very little hindrance from ice, to the spot where the Fury had been beached, and where Parry had cached her stores. The stores were found in perfect condition, but every vestige of the vessel was gone; it had undoubtedly been ground into pieces by the bergs. Ross now started to hunt for the new passage, but in latitude 72° was met by the ice. He worked his way southward, following the west shore line, landing occasionally for observations, and to take formal possession of the land. The coast, with its rapid tides, floating ice and dangerous reefs, made the voyage one of exceeding peril. He passed, however, as far south as latitude 70°, in a direction nearly south of "Fury Point." Then there arose an impenetrable ice barrier, and the vessel was forced into winter quarters.

The winter proved very favorable, and "an interesting tribe of natives" was discovered, who had never before seen a European face. With these people the crew fraternized, and with their assistance Ross made many interesting expeditions and discoveries along the coast line—exploring nearly down to the point where Fish (or Back) river was supposed to enter the sea. Their vessel was, indeed, ice-bound in its winter bay. They were forced to cut the ship out, but had got along only four miles when winter caught them again.

It proved to be a winter of excessive rigor, but they survived it, still having their Indians for company. The next summer the ice held on. On the cutting-out process was resorted to, once more, but only fourteen miles were accomplished, when winter compelled the vessel to go into harbor again (October, 1831). The cold was terrible, and their provisions were finally consumed, so that to abandon the vessel and reach the Fury's stores was their only salvation. The ship was abandoned in May, 1832, and early in July, after a tramp of three hundred miles, the stores were found. The Fury's small-boats were now put into requisition as the only method of escape. In September they succeeded in passing to Leopold's Island. A dreary sight met their vision. Lancaster Sound remained ice-bound; thus the whaling fleet,

which Ross expected to find there, could not advance further north than Admiralty inlet.

It was with sinking heart the crew turned and retraced their steps to the Fury's stores, and there, under canvas tents they lived all that fearful winter. Using their knowledge of Arctic life, they blocked the snow around their tents, and succeeded in living, but with exceeding suffering from want of clothing, bedding, and animal food. Not until August 14th, 1833, did the ice begin to move. Then the crew once more started for Leopold Island, and, to their great joy, beheld a vessel in the distance, trying to make the land. A strong gale, however, drove her up Lancaster Sound, and the men then headed for the entrance of the sound, where the whaler found them as she returned on her track.

That it was a joyful meeting we can well believe. Men wept like children. They had come back, as it were, from the dead. The ship proved to be the whaler Isabel, of Hull, which Ross himself had commanded in 1818, and on it and his crew—less only five who had died—returned to England, reaching Hull, October 18th, 1832.

Ross had been considered lost, and a vessel commanded by the brave Captain Back, fitted out by subscription, had started for the search for the lost navigator, but touching at Greenland, Back there learned of Ross' deliverance, and so was spared a fruitless search.

Ross' discoveries were very interesting and important. He solved the problem of no passage to the west from the south of the Boothia Gulf—he mapped the coast line along Boothia Land—he discovered the actual magnetic pole and obtained numerous other geographical and scientific results, that afterward were to guide Sir John Franklin in his remarkable quest for the true North-west Passage.

The Hunted Bride:
OR,
WEDDED, BUT NOT WON.

BY CORINNE CUSHMAN,

AUTHOR OF "BLACK EYES AND BLUE," "BRAVE BARBARA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

FLUTTERING TO THE FLAME.

THE bright leaves of autumn dropping, dropping to fade and mingle with the dull earth were like the hopes of Margaret's life, dropping into decay. After Branthope's return to the city, a loneliness, an *ennui*, amounting almost to despair, took possession of her. She grew weary of tending the fretful old man, weary of remaining always at home, weary of Branthope Villa itself, and the landscape upon which she looked from her pleasant window. This was but natural. The house was lonesome and gloomy—no young people, no mother, sisters—no society but that of the staid housekeeper and the irritable invalid. Hitherto love had upheld the girl in the discharge of her duties; she waited upon her guardian cheerfully; and no spot could be gloomy where Branthope had once been and was to come again. Now, all was changed. A gray monotony settled over all things. Branthope did not love her—was tired of her—probably would come no more to this place. Oh, how sick she felt of life and the world, often wishing that it were she who was doomed to be taken instead of old Uncle Peter. The cool fall weather agreed with Uncle Peter, who, though still confined to his room, required far less attention than formerly, passing much of his time in his arm-chair, looking over accounts, transacting such business as accumulated, and reading the newspapers of the day. This only gave Margaret the more leisure for indulging her melancholy.

On hazy Indian-summer afternoons she would climb to the tower, where, with her head drooped to the casement of the open window, her eyes would wander toward the south, where the city lay in which he dwelt, and her fingers would twine together in a fierce struggle to resist the inclination to fling herself to the ground, or to flee away and be seen no more. She envied the careless country-girls who went by in wagons, or on horseback, looking up with a respect amounting to awe at the spacious villa, and doubtless, in their turn envied of the beautiful and elegant young lady, sole heir to old Uncle Peter's property. She envied girls who had mothers, or sisters, or true lovers; she felt miserably desolate; and then, in the high tower, like Marianne in the Moated Grange, she sat,

"And rising from her bosom drew
Old letters, breathing of her worth,
'For love,' they said, 'must needs be true
To what is lovelier upon earth.'

"A man came to see the door,
To look at her with slight and say,
'But now thy beauty flows away,
To be alone forevermore.'

"Oh, cruel heart," she changed her tone,
'And cruel love, whose end is scorn,
Is this the end, to be left alone,
To live forgotten and die forlorn?"

Yes, in the pride of her youth and beauty, as deserted, as "forlorn," as though she had not a charm to win her love and companionship! A dozen times a day, as the various trains whistled in, stopping at or passing the little station, her color would change, and she would catch her breath, only to remember how vain it was to expect him, and to grow more restless than before.

This restlessness deepened into a slow fever; any physician noting the unnatural luster of her eye and the quickness of her pulse, would have said that something was wrong, and that she was in great danger of serious illness. The old doctor who attended her uncle did remark the excitement of her nervous system, which he attributed to over-exertion in her care of the invalid, strongly advising change of air and scene. She longed for it as the thirsty long for cool water; but her uncle did not favor the project, and there seemed no place to which she could go without escort. So the advice of the physician was slighted, and the fever of impatient desire of change burned in her veins.

Some time early in December, before the first snow fell, while the weather was still settled and bright, though cold, she received a letter from Branthope, the first since his visit made six weeks before. She had long ago decided that her love for him had turned to scorn—that it was a happy escape that she had not been permitted to marry a man whom she could not thoroughly respect, and upon whom she could not lean for support in every emergency; she had said to herself that he was egotistical, weak in his feelings as he was in his resolves, easily led astray, incapable of heroic self-denial, or any great ambition or achievement—an easy, pleasant, self-indulgent, handsome person, whom she admired and despised in equal proportions.

She would candidly have affirmed that this was the state of her feeling toward Branthope; but when the letter came, the old thrill ran from her heart to her finger-ends, her cheeks flushed, her hands trembled; she could not bring herself to break the seal in the presence of her uncle, but stole away, girl-fashion, to her chamber, that she might be alone while she read. She had no reason to expect the epistle contained anything but formal inquiries after the welfare of those at the villa—perhaps she expected nothing more; but the mere sight of the familiar handwriting set her pulses to fluttering. Glancing eagerly down the page, she read:

"Cousin Margaret:
Come to me! Come to me! Come to me!"

"I don't think, now, that I am about to propose something preposterous or ineffectual. I know you are tired out with playing the part of sick nurse; also, that your wardrobe needs replenishing. In that condition, and I noted with some concern that your dresses were getting out of date, in a frightful state of affairs to the female apprehension!) and that a change could be nothing but beneficial. Therefore, I beg of you, sweet cousin, to entreat that crabbed and disagreeable old guardian of yours will consent to let me have the use of your necessary funds, and allow you a few days in which to visit the city, do your shopping, brighten yourself up, etc. I promise to take good care of you, be very attentive, escort you to the opera of evenings, and go to the best for you shopping. There is no need of you doing like a fashionable foot-man, while you do your shopping. That is against the proprieties in this arrangement, as I can secure you a room in the highly respectable and fashionable house where I board, with the company of the lady's daughter, if you wish. I can also secure for you a room in a good hotel, if you prefer that.

"Ross' discoveries were very interesting and important. He solved the problem of no passage to the west from the south of the Boothia Gulf—he mapped the coast line along Boothia Land—he discovered the actual magnetic pole and obtained numerous other geographical and scientific results, that afterward were to guide Sir John Franklin in his remarkable quest for the true North-west Passage.

being so nervous; then Branthope himself stood at the door, waiting for her to come forth.

The look of love, of adoration, she gave him before he led her down the stairs, ought to have turned a worse man than this one from his purpose; but the selfishness of a frivolous, careless pleasure-seeker like young Maxwell is something more appalling than the set crimes of great villains. He thought not of the welfare of the girl who thus confided in him; he thought only of the results to himself of the deception he was about to practice.

"We are going to church, mother," said Miss Ella, pausing a moment at the parlor door; "we shall not be out late."

There by the curbstone stood the close carriage in waiting. Branthope was never more gracefully easy and self-possessed than as he helped the ladies in, and chatted to them during the brief drive. He was almost too gay to satisfy Margaret, who felt the deep solemnity of the occasion overpowering even her joy.

The carriage stopped in front of a large church, which loomed up dimly in the star-light. Margaret never learned the name of the church, nor on what street it stood, but it appeared to be somewhere in the suburbs, as there were vacant lots about it, and the gas-lights were few and far between.

"They do not have evening service here, but the pastor promised to be on hand; and a friend of mine, a gentleman, is to assist me in getting through with this dreadfully embarrassing matter," said Branthope, speaking quickly, as if, after all, he was more excited than he cared to show. Taking the cold hand of the confiding girl on his arm, he drew her forward into the dimly-lighted building; the sexton was there, and the pastor, as he had promised, was waiting, with a gentleman in a cloak standing near. There was only one lamp lighted near the altar; the place was cold; a tremor ran through the bride's frame, but too many conflicting emotions were throbbing at her heart to enable her to view calmly her surroundings. She did not have time to conjecture as to who her lover's friend might be; indeed, she did not throw back her gaze until she stood before the altar, and the clergyman began the solemn words of the marriage service. She did, indeed, notice—for she recalled it vividly afterward, that the pastor said, she following him, "I take thee, John," etc., instead of the more familiar Branthope—but as John was her cousin's first name, she recognized the appropriateness of its use at the instant.

How soon it was all over! the ring upon her finger, the benediction pronounced, and she, turning, agitated and trembling, to meet Branthope's eyes and smile.

"It is as well," he remarked, "since this is a quiet affair, to have it properly attested. Let us all sign our names to the church record."

The sexton brought the book, and the bride subscribed her name where she was told, never noticing, in her bewilderment, who signed first or last, and not yet having had a glimpse of Branthope's friend's face; she heard the clergyman expressing his thanks for the handsome *douceur* he had received; a gold piece glittered in the sexton's hand, for his trouble in opening the church; then Branthope again gave her his arm, to which she now clung heavily, almost overpowering by the consciousness of the important step she had so hastily taken, and again they stood on the cold pavement beneath the silver glint of winter stars. There were now two carriages before the church.

"Good-by, for the present," said Miss Ella, kissing the bride, laughingly; "we will ride home by ourselves. I wish you both every imaginable joy!" and almost before she could collect her thoughts to wonder why they need drive back by themselves, the bridegroom had lifted her into his carriage, sprung in after her, gave the word to the driver, and they were rapidly whirled along the noisy street.

Margaret was thankful that her husband did not too soon break the silence. The events of the last few hours had culminated so rapidly that now she desired a few moments of rest. Silently he sat by her side, as if to allow her this needed rest. They two were alone in the world together. The darkness of night shut them in, save when, every other moment, the light of a street lamp flashed in and was gone; the driver in his seat outside, attended only to the order which had been given him, to drive as fast as the law allowed, to the place which had been designated to him.

Presently the man by her side took her hand and kissed the wedding-ring upon it.

"Sweet Margaret!"

She started, tore her hand wildly from him, and stared at him through the darkness, until passing the next lamp, its gleams rested for one brief instant full upon his face. Then the bride shrank into the corner of the carriage, holding up both hands, and would have screamed, had not her voice failed her, her throat, dry as if filled with ashes, refusing to give forth a sound.

"What is it, my dear wife?" questioned the same calm, soft voice, whose first accent had thrilled her with dread and amazement.

"Your wife! your wife!" she gasped, at last. "Where is Branthope?"

"Escorting your bridesmaid home, darling, without doubt."

"Mr. Martinique, let me out of this carriage."

"Mrs. Martinique, I have taken too much trouble to secure you, to let you go thus easily."

"I do not know what you mean. I don't care what you mean or say. I must get out. Driver, stop!" she cried, frantically.

But the loud wheels rattled over the stones, and the driver either did not hear or did not care to seem so.

"Sweet wife, it is too late to quarrel, now. What can't be cured must be endured. How much happier for you to be married to one who worships you, than to an indifferent scapegrace like your cousin. He never cared for you, while I—"

"I am not married to you! don't say it! We are married—Branthope and I—oh, where is he, that he does not come?"

"Here is the marriage certificate—can you read it by this uncertain light? Take it, and keep it carefully. Such documents are sometimes important."

She snatched it from his hand, and strained her eyes to read it in the varying light. Yes! there was the blasting fact—their names linked together in an eternal bond—Margaret Branthope Maxwell, and John Lopez Martinique.

"I cannot understand it!" she cried, in despair.

"It is very simple," he said, calmly as ever. "I took your cousin's place when we approached the altar, as we had previously arranged. The clergyman was not in our confidence. He was told that you expected to marry me, but that your friends objected to accounts of my being a foreigner. Being assured of my respectability, ability to support a wife, that I was at liberty to marry, etc., and seeing no

reason why we, who desired it, should not be united, he made no great opposition to the privacy of the ceremony. Miss Ella was not in the plot, either; so that you cannot blame her. Your cousin did all the talking, I presume, when he announced the programme to her. He was to represent that you had come to New York on purpose to marry me, your uncle not being willing that you should wed a resident of another country, but that you were to affect an interest in him, the more perfectly to conceal your true purpose. Miss Ella doubtless thought that you acted admirably. We depended for the success of our plot, simply upon your excitement and embarrassment preventing your noticing, in the dim light, who stood beside you at the important moment."

"But why plot against me?" asked poor Margaret.

"Ay! there's the rub! I wanted you, sweet wife; wasn't that reason enough? and Maxwell wanted money! What more natural! I gave him a swinging *bouys*, over and above what he would have received had he married you. Firstly, I canceled all his obligations to me, which were not small; then I gave him funds on which to keep up appearances this winter, and lastly, I abandoned all your claims to the Maxwell estates, as I intend to take you far from this country, and to provide for you so generously that you will not require any of your uncle's property. It is your noble cousin's plan to visit Branthope Villa, and there represent to your doting relative that you voluntarily abandoned him to follow my fortunes round the world. Of course he will again return, the will, young Maxwell will have the property and the reputation of being his uncle's favorite, and can, doubtless, sooner or later, win the pretty young lady with whom he is at present infatuated."

Margaret moaned—gasping, dry sound, which ought to have awakened pity in a clod. Perhaps it did move the heart of this curious man, who, professing to love her as he did, was willing to peril her happiness to secure himself a doubtful bliss; he attempted again to take her hand, saying, soothingly:

"Why regret that unworthy cousin? He had neither the taste nor the heart to appreciate you, while I have thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing, lived for nothing but you since I first felt the faintest assurance that I should some time win you. I will be a good husband to you—will not demand nor expect too much from you, until you have time to adjust your feelings to your circumstances. For you to rebel against fate is vain. Submission and a degree of contentment will best secure your happiness."

"Where are we going?" she asked, as he paused.

"To the dock, where we will take a boat and be rowed to the ship's side, which to-morrow morning sets sail for South America."

Margaret leaned her head against the cushioned seat; her brain whirled for a few seconds; she thought herself about to faint, and only saved herself by the strength of a resolve will.

A bride! oh, miserable reality! A short time she had stepped into that carriage, happy, blessed, her heart throbbing with the purest, warmest love for one whom she had chosen in her earliest girlhood—her first love—he to whom she had been so true and tender, even while having his faults of character cruelly revealed to her—her face rosy, her eyes lustrous with the tender glow of the mar-

ket day prediction.

Now she sat beside her husband, hand and heart turned into ice. This man, a stranger, with whom she had never conversed but twice—whose habits, business, nationality were unknown to her—a stranger, in every sense of the word, since there are those to whom we feel drawn at once as by ties of sympathy or kinship, while this person had ever been to the eyes lustrious with the tender glow of the market day prediction.

Now she sat beside her husband, hand and heart turned into ice. This man, a stranger, with whom she had never conversed but twice—whose habits, business, nationality were unknown to her—a stranger, in every sense of the word, since there are those to whom we feel drawn at once as by ties of sympathy or kinship, while this person had ever been to the eyes lustrious with the tender glow of the market day prediction.

She remained perfectly silent and motionless, fixed in a terrible resolution. This silence seemed to trouble her companion more than the wildest reproaches would have done. He began to talk to her soothingly, as he would to a frightened child, picturing to her the beautiful and happy life she should lead, in a tropical country, on one of his vast estates, where mountains of snow cast their cool shadows over land stately with palms, gorgeous with flowers, pleasant with fruits—where the seas lashed upon the sand in softest music—where slaves should obey her slightest wish—and he, her lover—husband, should devote himself to her every caprice. The persuasive, passion-inspired promises fell upon her ears without meaning—they were filled with the ominous murmur of a rising tide, which was to drown out all the sweetness of her life. Yes! her bridal-chamber should be the grave—and such a grave! The slim, slippery under walls and timbers of those hideous piers, among which her body would wash to and fro, be bruised, and swollen and blackened—oh, God! horrible—horrible! but not so horrible as that ship, bound southward, lying out there blackly upon the black river, awaiting the bridegroom and his bride.

The carriage stopped, the driver sprang down and opened the door; she leaned forward quickly, before Mr. Martinique could step out.

"Driver, will you not help me? have pity on a friendless girl!"

"I was told as it was all right, and I've a double-angle here in my pocket, not to take no notice of your winnem-nonsense," was the cool reply.

She said no more; but, as her companion assisted her to alight, she darted an eager glance about her. Only one lamp burned on the long wharf, and that was at some distance; it was Sabbath evening; not a policeman was in sight—no human being, save him by her side; the coachman now driving hurriedly off, and two sailors lounging in an open boat, which she dimly made out, as her husband dragged her to the edge of the dock, to be waiting alongside. Even in heaven there seemed no pity; the silver stars twinkled with a cold and distant brightness; her whole life rushed through

her mind; tears sprung to her eyes as the image of Uncle Peter, turning his gaze to the door, in a vain expectation of seeing her enter, arose before her—Branthope, whom she so loved, and who had been so murderously cruel to her—

"Look alive there, men! and be very careful of the lady! Do not let go of her until I am in the boat," called Martinique, in a low, but sharp, authoritative voice.

Did he then suspect what was passing in her thoughts?

He lifted her, gently enough, and lowered her down into the strong arms which received her from below. The tide was rising, and the boat rocked and bumped against the timbers of the pier; the water moaned and groaned, as it rushed, white and seething, into every opening; the wind was beginning to rise, too, as it will on winter nights, and whistled dismally as it flew by.

"Steady, men, steady!" cried the firm voice of the gentleman, who had resigned his wife to her.

"Ay, ay, sir!" But it was not "ay, ay."

Margaret, before the men could place her on the deck, heard nothing, after the first moment, but a thunderous beating in her ears; the chilling, cramping water closed about her, and she went down, down, struggling and clutching at the treacherous element—down until the thunder melted into music, and her eyes closed over the fire which flashed and played about them, and she floated on clouds of eiderdown.

CHAPTER IX. THE PRICE OF BLOOD.

GREAT was the consternation of Branthope Maxwell, as he sat at his late breakfast, carelessly jesting with Miss Ella upon the "runaway match," with scarcely a shadow of remorse over his sunshine—certainly not enough to spoil his appetite, for the chicken frittoe had disappeared from his plate, and he was deep in his second cup of strong coffee—great was his consternation, we repeat, when a note was handed to him, marked "in haste," which he recognized as the handwriting of John Lopez Martinique, and tearing it open, he read:

"Come to the St. Nicholas at once. A terrible accident has happened. Say nothing to any one, but come quickly. I am half-mad."

Branthope turned perfectly white as he read this scrawl.

"What has happened? Any one ill?" inquired Miss Ella, startled by the change in his countenance.

"A telegraph—my uncle—nothing serious, perhaps; let you know on my return," he replied, as he went hastily out. In the midst of his alarm and remorse, there came upon him the thought that there might be results of his late infamous transaction which would make it necessary, for his own good repute, to keep concealed.

Not knowing in what shape to look for the impending disaster, he reached the hotel in a state which would have been pitiable, had he been deserving of pity, and on inquiring for Mr. Martinique, was shown to the private parlor of that gentleman, whom he found pacing the floor, his hands locked behind him, his face almost as sallow and rigid as the dead, his dull and shrunken, looking old and shockingly changed.

"Heaven and earth, Martinique, what is the matter?" His trembling lips could hardly frame the question, so powerful was the work of fear and conscience combined.

"Shut the door, Maxwell; lock it. She is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, you infernal villain, dead! She drowned herself. If it had not been for you, she would not have happened."

Branthope sank into a chair, trembling from head to foot. He was not so inhuman as to hear of his cousin's sudden and violent death without great distress of mind, enhanced by the knowledge that he was, in one sense, a murderer; but the words of his accuser stung him into a resistance which enabled him to bear the shock better than he would have done had he not been made angry.

After an absolute silence of several moments, he suppressed the trembling of his limbs, and asked, huskily:

"When, and how? You should have guarded against such accidents, Martinique. I warned you that she had a will of steel, did I not?"

"Yes! yes! I ved her the better for that. But, my God, I did not think that young creature had the courage to rush into such a death. I did order the men not to let go their hold of her. She purposely flung herself over, dragging one of the men with her. I was not in the boat, but I jumped into the water to endeavor to save her. I am not a very good swimmer; I should have lost my life had I not been assisted by the police, who came at our outcry. Yes, Heaven knows, I did all I could to rescue her;" this more to himself than his hearer, as endeavoring to lessen the aching burden of remorse and guilt.

"What did the police think of the accident?" inquired Branthope, now, as ever, selfish, and shrinking from the dread of exposure of his own unmanly conduct, even while cold with the shock of her fate who had been so near to him so many years.

"They suspected nothing wrong. I explained to them that the lady was my wife, and that we were about to embark on the ship Golden Shore for South America. No one is in our secret but our two selves, Maxwell; there is nothing to be apprehended in that direction. Miss Ella, the minister who united us, all who hear of my sad affliction, will attribute it entirely to accident."

"The driver of the coach?"

"Ha! there may be something in that. She did appeal to him for aid, showing that she was being abducted. But no one will heed his story, when I have you and Miss Ella, and all the other parties, for witnesses that we were married, she of her own free will. The two sailors who were in the boat sailed this morning; they were in doubt, last night, whether or no the lady went overboard on purpose. I purchased their opinion that she did not. No one can doubt my grief who sees me. I loved that woman, Maxwell, as you know, and I hate you, you cowardly, betraying rascal, who brought her to such a fate."

Branthope smiled sardonically, through his ash-pallor.

"The less said about that the better," he sneered; then, as the reality of his cousin's loss forced itself upon him, he burst into tears.

"I thought she would be happier with you than me," he sobbed. "You were rich; you loved her better than I; poor Margaret! I believed she would get over her disappointment in a few days, and find a brilliant life before

her. I did, indeed. I never imagined she would be so desperate."

Martinique walked back and forth in gloomy silence.

"Did they find the—the—body?" shuddered Branthope, after a time.

"No; but I have offered a reward for its recovery. If it is found, I shall take the body of my wife with me, and cause it to be buried on my estates. I shall take the next steamer to this country. Whether I shall ever again come to you, after the search for her—her corpse—is over, I never wish to see your face again. You have all the reward I promised you; there is nothing now to prevent your standing first in your uncle's will. I hope you are satisfied."

Branthope remained silent under the reproaches of a man equally guilty with himself. The other rung the bell, and ordered a cup of strong coffee.

"We must go down there together," said Mrs. Betsey, "and my nerves are too unstrung to bear it. The coffee will tone me up."

When it was brought, he swallowed it, black and hot, pressed his hat down over his eyes, and went out with his companion, both so pale and haggard as to attract many inquisitive eyes as they entered a carriage and were driven off to the right, through a side-street, until they came to the river at one of the piers above Canal street, off which in the river, the vessel had been anchored by Martinique's order.

There was no news that day, nor the next, nor the third—not for a week; but on the morning preceding the noon on which the steamer in which he had engaged passage, was to sail, Mr. Martinique was summoned to look upon an object which lay at the nearest police-station from that pier, which the officers thought must be the body of his wife.

Together they looked, those two men! upon the appalling sight. That *night* be what was left of the beautiful Margaret. They could not be entirely certain. The fingers of the left hand, upon which the ring should have been—an emerald ring encircled by diamonds, which Mr. Martinique had taken from his own hand to place on that of his bride—were gnawed away by river vermin; but the hair, dripping and tangled, was long and black, and glossy, like hers, and the teeth were even and white, like those of a beautiful young girl; as to the rest, they could but shudder and turn away.

In height, the figure corresponded with Margaret's; so the two most interested testified before the coroner's jury that the body was that of Mrs. Martinique, and Mr. Martinique hastily paying his rewards, and leaving money with Branthope for the funeral expenses, hurried to the steamer, whose hour of departure drew nigh, obliged to abandon his intention of having his wife buried in his own country.

While the vessel was steaming out of the harbor, that afternoon, his eyes resting on the slopes

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When Conductor Wilkinson left his pretty passenger at Mineola, that afternoon, they were mutually sorry to part. But a surprise was in store for Esther, when the 5.55 train stopped beside the platform. A tall form in blue uniform piloted her to the car and Conductor Wilkinson arranged a seat for her, saying:

"I've got a little business down at Port Jefferson"—without feeling a twinge of conscience for the falsehood—"so I'm going down this train, to-night, while Billy Dennis runs mine for me."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Esther, with bright eyes, but blushing a trifle at her admission.

It was half-past seven of the rosy night when Mark Wilkinson helped Esther down at St. James' station, and gave her hand a hearty squeeze at parting, and whispered an assurance that he hoped she'd "find the folks real pleasant," and that he meant to come and see how she liked it there, before long. For a few minutes the little beauty in the black robes felt desolate enough; but then a kind-faced old man drove up to the platform, and she was joyfully welcomed by uncle Elisha. Her trunk, which by some carelessness had not arrived until the same train, was put in the wagon, and off they went in the sweet twilight; Esther soon feeling at home with her uncle, though she had some dread of meeting her aunt, who, the farmer kindly told her, she mustn't mind. "She's real good sort, ef you rub her the right way."

Mrs. Randall's reception of her orphan niece was not entirely ungracious; but when Esther went early to her room, feeling sorely homesick, she pursed up her lips and waited for her better-half to open the conversation in which she intended to express her views of the young lady.

"She's a right nice little 'un, isn't she, Betsey?" said uncle Elisha, coaxingly. "A deal like her mother, only more perk lookin'."

"Perf! Yes, I guess so. But she'll find she isn't goin' to keep up any of her city fashions here, I kin soon tell her. It'll cost enough to give her calico gowns."

"Well, well!" The farmer had accidentally pulled from his pocket a letter. "Ef I didn't forget all about this letter she gave me," and he proceeded to read it, while Mrs. Randall cleared the late tea-table.

"Betsey! Betsey!" he called, excitedly, in a few minutes; and as his wife appeared, he looked at her curiously, as he added, "What do you think? Esther's worth ten thousand dollars! This is a letter from her guardian. And she's only come to stay till we git tired of her, because her mother's wish was to have her see the old homestead, and learn to know her uncle Elisha!"

"Umph!" said aunt Betsey, rather crestfallen; but in no other way than a difference of manner toward Esther did she ever acknowledge her defeated position.

And when Mark Wilkinson, late in the fall—having paid several flying visits to the Randall Farm, and gained Esther's consent to overlook the fact that he had once loved and lost, and take him for her husband—relieved aunt Betsey entirely of her trouble, that lady, as well as kind uncle Elisha, was really sorry to have the sweet maiden go. As for Esther, she assured them, again and again, that she was so glad she even came to St. James; adding—to

"You know why."

TWO KISSES.

BY MARC O. ROLFE.

The moon was shining softly, the fields were decked in green.

The wind through the trembling branches sung a low, sweet and low,

And with dear Ivy Landon, my heart's own royal queen.

I wandered out beside the brooklet, with its calm, unripling flow.

Across the stretch of meadow, to the elm-tree gray and gloomy,

And, with a kiss upon her forehead, I twined it in her hair.

The sun was shining coldly, the fields were wrapped in white.

The wind through the shivering branches moaned a requiescent and drear;

And I walked lonely, sadly, when I went with her that night.

To a lone grave 'neath the elm-tree, grim sentinel gray and stern—

And I wept to know that Ivy, my bride, was sleeping there.

But it was while I mourned her deeply, that God, who held her dear,

Had kissed her on her forehead, and twined his jewels in her hair.

Rifle and Tomahawk: OR, NED WYLDE, THE BOY SCOUT.

A Romance of the Sioux War.

BY "TEXAS JACK."

(S. B. OMONDRO.)

CHAPTER XVI.

MONTANA MIKE ASTONISHED.

ONE, two, three! and the three pursuers of Montana Mike bit the dust, brought down by the unerring fire of Ned Wylde.

"Now, sir, I think we had better leave here—I have a hiding-place above that a snake can not find," and the boy turned coolly to his companion, who with a great effort, got to his feet.

Leading the way up the steep ascent, the boy soon stopped by a large tree that grew to a great height and overhanging a rocky cliff above.

"Now, this is not a very hard tree to climb, and it leads to a safe place. I would have been there now, only I didn't wish to leave my own good pony; but I come here in case I should get into trouble, for I was in these hills hunting, a year ago, as guide to a party of gentlemen from the city, and I found out this retreat then."

"You are a brave boy. You have saved my life," at last Mike found breath enough to say.

"We won't talk of that, now. Are you able to climb this tree?"

"Yes; but have we left no trail?"

"None since we left the prairie. A hound couldn't track us here."

Into the branches the two then clambered from the rocks, and at a height of thirty feet from the foot of the giant monarch of the forest.

Slowly up the trunk they went, from limb to limb, until they came to where a huge branch overhung the rocky summit of a jutting spur of the mountain.

Out upon this they went, and let themselves down upon a kind of shelf, overhanging by a sheer precipice behind them, protected by boulders upon each side, and open toward the prairie.

The only means of access was by way of the

tree, and a safer, better place could not have been found.

"I followed a bear up here last year; and I got him, too; see, here is water, and these rocks form a kind of a cave," and Ned pointed to a trickling rivulet that fell over the precipice, and then threw his roll of blankets under the sheltering cliff.

"There, lie down and rest yourself, and you will soon be all right."

Montana Mike obeyed; the boy was the master of the man then.

Explanations then followed between the two. Montana Mike's story was soon told; all that he cared to have the man know, the boy then made known. He had come into these parts in search of one whom he was determined to find.

That very night he had found him, and—had lost him.

But he would not despair; his life would be devoted to the duty, for duty it was to more than one.

Then the two went peacefully to sleep, and the sun was far across the heavens when they awoke.

Well prepared with provisions, and most plenty of good water near, the two fared most comfortably, little troubled by the bands of prowling Indians they saw going hither and thither, or their wild war-cries when they discovered their three dead comrades, slain by Ned Wylde.

Thus another night and day passed, the Indians searching the gorges and hills for them, but without success, and both Montana Mike and Ned Wylde were perfectly satisfied that their retreat could not be discovered.

"To-morrow I will be able to travel—I will be myself again, thanks to you," said Mike, as the two sat together in the moonlight, the third night of their stay on the rocky shelf.

"Well, we can then slip away from here and go and join Crook, who is marching toward the Rosebud. When he strikes these villages the war will end, and then I can continue my hunt without danger of being constantly hunted."

"I am; but is not that an object moving yonder, far out on the prairie?"

Mike glanced in the direction indicated, and after a while answered: "Your eyes are better than mine, if you see anything."

"I see it now distinctly; it is either a horse or a buffalo coming this way; it is too large for a deer."

"Yes, I see it, now; it is a horse, and he has no rider. Now will be our chance if he comes this way."

The boy continued to watch the approaching object with the greatest interest.

Nearer and nearer it came, until the moonlight plainly discovered it to be a horse walking slowly toward the hills.

"There is no man upon him. I'll go down and catch him, if I can—hal! see over his back! a man walking behind him; I saw him raise his head."

"You are right boy; he is approaching these hills cautiously, and for fear of a shot, is keeping behind his steed."

With increased interest the two men gazed upon the approaching animal, which soon was almost at the base of the hills.

Here the horse halted, and above his back was visible a head, surmounted by a broad sombrero.

"It is a white man, that's certain," said Mike, and as he spoke, apparently satisfied with his observation, the man came round to the side of the steed and sprung into the saddle.

"Hulloa! what! why, what the deuce ails the boy?" exclaimed Montana Mike, as Ned Wylde suddenly sprang to his feet, threw his rifle-strap over his back, and the next moment was rapidly descending the tree.

To the call of Mike the boy made no answer—perhaps he did not hear.

Then he disappeared, and a few moments of suspense followed, when a dark form dashed out into the moonlight from the base of the hill.

Still, like a statue, sat the horseman in his saddle, his eyes turned searchingly upon the tree-bordered hill.

Suddenly his gaze caught the form bounding from the shadow, and like thought he wheeled to dash away.

"Hart Moline! Hart Moline! for God's sake, hold!" came the ringing tones of the boy; but, unheeding, the man sped on; the rifle leaped to the shoulder of Ned Wylde, and a sharp report followed.

High in air bounded the splendid steed ridden by the man, but he did not go down, and if hit hard, still had struggled to continue his flight.

As if determined to kill, the boy sent shot after shot in pursuit of the flying horseman, who, apparently unharmed, still pressed on.

Then, in seeming despair, the brave boy broke down, and leaning his head upon his horse, he burst into a flood of tears, his bitter sobs heard distinctly by Montana Mike upon the cliff.

A clatter of hoofs suddenly aroused the boy.

They were near at hand: and once more himself, he wheeled quickly to meet an expected foe.

But no; the moonlight shone upon a superb black steed and a splendid looking rider.

It was Fearless Frank, the scout, who had suddenly appeared upon the scene, coming from around the base of the hill, and sweeping on like the wind.

Seemingly unmindful of the presence of the boy, he spurred on hot on the trail of Hart Moline, and as fast as he could run, Ned Wylde ran on in chase, and five minutes after the three were lost to the gaze of Montana Mike, who, with surprise, had watched the strange scene occurring upon the prairie.

CHAPTER XVII. TRAILING A REBELLAGE.

WHEN Fearless Frank left the camp of General Crook, he felt that he had a dangerous duty before him, for he was determined to again hold converse with the Rose of the Rosebud, and none knew the danger attending such a determination better than himself.

Having been turned aside from his former scout to the prairie encampment of Sitting Bull, by the discovery of the buried woman in the thicket, he shaped his course again in that direction, and approached it with the greatest caution, in the early evening ere the moon had risen.

Halting for a rest for his steed, after crossing the river, he sought a place of concealment for Whirlwind, and then cautiously crept in the direction of the Indian village.

At length he left the shelter of the river bank, and was creeping through an open piece of timber, when the noise of hoofs caused him to quickly draw himself up into the branches of a tree near at hand.

A moment after a score of warriors came along, and halted beneath the shadow of the very tree that concealed the scout.

Why they had stopped there, the scout could not tell, and for a moment believed that their quick eyes had fallen upon his trail.

No; they were not looking but listening.

Then the ears of the scout caught the clatter of hoofs; a horse was approaching over the prairie, and coming at a rapid gallop.

This sound was what had caused the Indians to halt.

Each warrior then, at a motion of one who seemed to be the chief, took shelter behind the trunks of some convenient trees, and he who had seemed the leader remained beneath the large willow that concealed the scout.

Brightly through an opening in the branches the moonlight fell upon the warrior, and every nerve in the frame of the scout trembled as he beheld, almost in reach of his hand, the dark, stern, daring face and athletic form of Sitting Bull, who little dreamed that a deadly enemy was near, contemplating the chances of escape should he kill him where he sat upon his pretentious yawned a huge cavern.

"I guess this will keep—I'll go back and get Montana Mike, and together we'll solve this mystery."

"Anyhow, I have found out one thing; this is the secret retreat of Hart Moline, and I believe he is in league with the red-skins."

So saying, the boy retraced his way, and gliding down the gorge, he suddenly stopped, with an expression of delight upon his face.

"Who can this belong to?" Hart Moline's name how can I warn him of danger?" muttered Fearless Frank, and he brought his rifle ready for ready use.

Suddenly the horseman drew rein; his searching eyes had detected the half-concealed forms of the warriors behind the tree-trunks.

"Let not my red brothers dread evil. I am the friend of their people," cried the horseman in the Sioux tongue.

"The pale-face is no friend to the red-man; his people are now on the trail of my warriors," replied the deep, stern voice of Sitting Bull, who yet kept his position behind the tree.

"The pale-faces have driven me from their villages; they hunt me, as does the red-man, and I am forced to live up in the tepees of my Sioux brothers."

"I would show them how to strike to the heart of the pale-face, and load their belts with scalps; will my red brothers trust me now?"

"I am no coyote in their village."

"The pale-face has spoken well; if his tongue is not crooked; let him come here and look in the eyes of Sitting Bull."

"Sitting Bull! It is you whom I seek. I will find your people; they will be here to help me, and I will be avenged."

"It is you whom I seek. I will find your people; they will be here to help me, and I will be avenged."

"First, here is a gun I will lend you. It is loaded, and will shoot sixteen times."

"And the owner—you killed him!"

"No, I escaped me; but I made a discovery, and returned for you."

"I am ready; what did you discover?"

"Come down and bring the traps with you. I have business for both of us," called the boy, and in ten minutes more Montana Mike stood by his side.

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DECMBR.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Fatal month that loveth to see
Beautiful things perish,
That's the last month in the year
That I'd ever cherish!
We must sit around our hearths
After daily labors
Piling coals upon the fire—
And o'heads of neighbors.
The sun to warmer climes retires,
And the skies grow colder;
And December comes to the earth
Thou givest the cold shoulder.
Light of other days is gone
That once shone so gladly;
And in going up the street
Down we go quite sadly.
Cold the Boreal wind sweeps down
From the Arctic ice-fields;
And it blows the frost away—
While it blows our noses.
Dark and dim the window-pane,
For the frost-flowers prink it,
And the nights are cold and blank,
And we want more blanket.
There's the hungry at the door
Knocking for a pittance,
Or you'll give him a sack,
And old socks for mittens.
Dying year stands shivering
O'er nature's wanning fire;
And the flame is very low—
Overcoats are higher.
Round the house the chill wind blows,
Vesper hour and matin,
Aye through the night it steals—
I never stuff a hat in,
Feathery flakes how light they fall!
Quick and ever quicker,
Covering the walks and ways—
Where's a little nigger?
Disappointment only comes
To the spirit's hunger!
Last year's overcoat were short—
This year's free-coats longer.
Dead are all the tender hopes
Flower-time created;
Dark seems all the future sky—
Summer clothes have faded.
Oh, December, dark and drear,
They reign little pleasures!
Icicles hang from the eaves—
Also from the trees.

Adrift on the Prairie :

OR,
THE ADVENTURES OF FOUR YOUNG NIMRODS.

BY OLL COOMES,
AUTHOR OF "DAKOTA DAN," "IDAHO TOM,"
"HAPPY HARRY," ETC., ETC.

V.—GEORGE'S GUN DON'T WORK—OFF FOR SWAN LAKE.

It was decided, before retiring that night, that we all make general raid upon the deer-range the following day, and so cleaned up our guns and got everything in readiness for an early start. George went so far as to load his gun that night, that he might be on time the following morning. He elated over his success in hunting, and vowed his intention of showing Jim how to take in deer the next day.

Finally we retired, and being quite exhausted over our day's exercise, we soon fell asleep. During the night I awoke, and rising to a sitting posture, I raised the cover of the wagon in which I was sleeping, and looked out. The moon was shining, and close by in its light I saw, to my surprise, my friend Kempy, *en déshabillé*, with a gun by his side and a ramrod in his hand, going through the motions of loading the weapon. My first thoughts were that he was laboring under a spell of somnambulism, and so I resolved to keep still and watch him. If he started off, then I would awake him. But after he had gone through the motion of loading his gun for the hundredth time or more, he put the gun away and returned to his couch under the wagon. I was puzzled by his strange, silent movement but said nothing to him about it; nor did I tell the boys.

The night passed away, and by sunrise the next morning we were off for the deer-range. After a day's hunting we returned to camp. All were in the best of spirits but George. He had had the chance of several shots that day at deer, but he had been unable to get his gun off. He had primed it a score of times; the caps would burst, but no discharge would follow. He knew he had loaded his gun the evening before as carefully as he ever did in his life.

"Draw your loads, why don't you?" asked Jim.

"I would have done so, had I possessed a wad-screw when in the field; now I shall proceed to investigate the cause of my bad luck to-day."

Attaching a screw to his ramrod, he inserted it into his gun. To his surprise the rod did not descend over half the length of the barrel ere it struck some obstruction.

"By St. Peter, the charge is blown half out, anyhow," George remarked, twisting the screw into the top wad and drawing it out. Then he turned the gun up, expecting the shot to run out, but he was disappointed.

"I surely didn't put two wads of the shot," he said, inserting the rod again, and drawing out a second wad sure enough. But still the shot refused to quit the barrel. A third wad—a fourth, fifth, and so on up to fifty, were withdrawn ere he had cleared one barrel, and found that there was not a grain of powder nor a shot in either barrel.

George was completely astonished, but when he caught sight of Jim's face, the whole truth flashed through his brain in an instant—Jim had been tampering with his gun.

To me the mystery of Jim's movements on the previous night was now satisfactorily explained. It was then, at the dead hour of night, that the spirit of mischief took possession of him, and he arose and proceeded to put George's gun in the useless condition he now found it, knowing full well that George's inexperience in handling a gun would not detect the trick very soon.

"Kempy, you confounded villain!" the youth exclaimed, "you have been tampering with my—"

The rest of the sentence was drowned in the roar of laughter that pealed from Jim's lips.

"Never mind, my gay young cavalier. I'll see to your case before this matter is forgotten," King finally remarked.

The next minute the massive tread of a foot-step sounded near, and Uncle Lige Farmer made his appearance in camp.

"Evening, boys," he said, in his jolly, bluff way of speaking; "what luck to-day?"

"Good, with but one exception," replied Jim, stealing a sly glance at George.

"Wal, it's been a spankin' good day for huntin'," said Uncle Lige, seating himself before our evening camp-fire. "Thar's been gobs of deer covarin' round back that for some time; but the best pickin' I know of, boys, is over atwixt the Purgatory and Hell."

* These names were applied to two terrible sloughs situated to the left of fifteen miles west of Sac City; and were held in almost as much dread by travelers as the places to which the names properly belonged.

"Where?" exclaimed Bob, his big eyes opening to their fullest extent.

"Back here, 'bout twenty miles north. Thar's two sloughs thar—one called Purgatory and t'other Hell Slough, and I tell you they're swamper, boys. Thar's been more solid swearin' done up than any place this side of the sulphur pit! Why, you can actly smell stone round thar, the place's so nigh related to the bottomless pit itself."

"What gave them those scorching old names?" asked George.

"A party of emigrants came down that way a few years ago, and arter paddlin' through one slough, they went on and stuck in t'other. They was tellin' it afterward, and says one, 'arter plumbin' and wallerin' through Purgatory, we went on and mired down in Hell,' and ever since that time them sloughs have been known by their names."

"Well," said George, with affected seriousness, "after finding out what you have been guilty of, Jim, I am inclined to think you are getting pretty close to where you're wanted."

"I'm not alone, thank fortune, exclaimed Kempy."

"Boys, how long do you propose to tarry here?" asked Uncle Lige.

"We would like to leave immediately, if we could obtain your services as guide to Swan Lake," I answered.

"I'm your persimmons, boys—just as lief spend a week or two with you youngsters as not. Thar's a lot of friendly Musquakie Indians camped up thar, and so thar'll be a chance for some royal fun. I'll hitch up Buck and Bright and haul my canoe up to the lake, so's you can rove the water over and over, to your heart's content."

"All right," we responded, with eager delight, "let us be up and off by sunrise."

"That's it, boys, if ye want to make a good day of it; so I'll he me to the house, snatch off a bit of sleep, and be ready for the trip," and Uncle Lige rose and took his departure.

We at once retired to rest, and were soon fast asleep, our minds filled with visions, the offerings of our most ardent anticipations of the morrow.

The night passed quietly away and with the first streaks of dawn we were up and ready to depart for Swan Lake. Uncle Lige soon came rattling down with his prancing oxen to a low-wheeled wagon, upon which he placed the canoe and outfit. Then, with gad in hand, he mounted into the canoe, swung his whip through the air with a hissing crack, and rolled away toward the north. We followed, closed behind, in our own conveyance.

Our course lay over an undulating prairie, whose limits were the blue horizon. We plunged through Indian creek, at the risk of drowning our animals, and crossing the low bottom beyond, we began the gradual ascent of a long inclination, terminating in an immense tract of rolling table lands.

As we toiled slowly up the hill, through the deep, brown grass, our guide stopped his team, and pointing to a large mound covered with reeds, he said:

"Boys, cut yander, where ye see 'em weeds, are one of the natural curiosities of this prairie. It's a gushin' mineral spring with trampin' across to see. You can't drive to it, for the ground is soft and spongy around it. It'll be as much as you can do to 'preach it on foot. If ye go, look out for deer; they kind o' hanker round thar."

We left our team in Uncle Lige's care and started to the spring. Before we reached it, we found deer tracks on the prairie, pointing toward the mound, whither the animals had been attracted by the saline elements of the water. As we ascended the mound we found Uncle Lige's words were true. The earth was soft and spongy and covered over with a thin turf, that trembled and quivered under our weight, threatening to break through and engulf us at every step. Here and there were dark, dismal holes, and gaping cracks in the earth, resembling the pits and fissures around volcanic crater. We found the spring on the summit of the mound. The water was gushing out slowly, and passing off along a small channel it had worn through the crust, or surface. We drank of it through a hollow reed that served as a kind of filter. It was cold and clear, but strongly impregnated with minerals.

Having fully explored the mound, we returned to the wagons and resumed our journey up the slope. We finally reached the most prominent point on the eminence above, from which a grand and imposing scene was unfolded to our enraptured gaze.

The Wrong Man.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

ALICE AYLMER certainly looked very pretty, and very girlish, as she stood in Squire Homer's office, with her cheeks flushing eagerly, and her brown eyes wearing a look of repression and excitement, as she answered question after question, put to her by the five members of the village school commission.

"You really pass a very good examination, Miss Aylmer—very good. So far as I can see, you are qualified for the position of teaching in the school."

Miss Aylmer—very good. So far as I can see, you are qualified for the position of teaching in the school."

Old Squire Homer polished his glasses with his silk handkerchief, as he took a kindly, critical survey of her, and then turned to Mr. Jonathan Edwards.

"What do you think about it?"

Mrs. Aylmer puckered up her sallow forehead.

"Well, I haven't the least fault to find with this young woman. As you say, she has passed her examination creditably, but whether or not she isn't too young to manage those big boys, that is what I am thinking about."

Alice's heart felt suddenly sinking to the heels of her trim No. 2 boots:—*supp* & they shouldn't give her the situation after all?

"I was thinking of it, myself," Squire Homer went on, thoughtfully, and Alice made a little despatch over that she *shouldn't* give it to her. "I was thinking myself, perhaps Miss Aylmer would not know how to manage those big boys; do you think you could, Miss Aylmer?"

Alice drew her lissome figure proudly up, and her shiny brown eyes looked calmly in the old gentleman's.

"I'm not in the least afraid of big boys, Squire Homer."

"But they're quite young men—Bob White is twenty, I am sure."

"I'm not at all afraid of young men, either. They are more easily managed than—old men she wanted to say, but added demurely, instead—"than young women."

There was just the faintest twinkle of humor in old Mr. Edwards' eyes as he peered through his glasses.

"I'll tell you what we will do; we'll consider it, Miss Aylmer. There is a young man who would like the position and I will cordially

say I would like to see our schools under a gentleman's charge. I would like the committee to see Mr. Osmond, and afterward decide. On Wednesday, at four o'clock, we would like to see you here, for the final decision. Remember, Miss Aylmer, at four o'clock, on Wednesday—not a minute later.

And Alice had to go away content with only this, as the reward of her eager anticipations.

"It's too bad; it's just as mean as mean can be! The idea of a man trying to run a woman out of a position! I would crush that fellow Osmond to death if I had him here! Oh, how I do hate him! And he *shan't* have the school!"

Some such thoughts were coursing wildly through Alice's head as she walked rapidly home through the early October dusk, rustling her skirts through the piles of fallen leaves that had been showering down in russet somberness.

And her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes glowing with a sense of just indignation, because she was so unfortunate as to be only a woman, she was to be outstripped in the race between her and this fanciful-named young fellow.

"But I *wo'n't* be outstripped! I am as capable and competent as he, and I verily believe if we were reduced to a question of brains, I'd outwit him. As it is, Mr. Osmond—oh, how I hate that name!—this Mr. Osmond shall fain't him outgeneraled by a girl's wit. He *shan't* have the school!" And Alice opened the door of the sitting-room at home with an energy that could only be expressed in manuscript by putting three heavy lies under the word—flung open the door, in her impetuosity, charming way, to see a good-looking, gentlemanly fellow, sitting very much at his ease in the big green leather reclining-chair, and his mother quite delighted and excited as she came fluttering toward Alice.

"Oh, Alice, here you are! You don't know how long we've been waiting for you. This is Romyn Osmond, Alice, a distant relation of mine. Mr. Osmond, this is my daughter Alice

of all."

Romyn Osmond! Romyn Osmond, of all the world, she already so cordially hated—the less-than-man who was so promptly on the ground to get the position she so wanted and needed! And Alice's saucy little mouth curled as she looked curiously at him.

"Oh! Mr. Osmond—why, mamma, I had no idea you had any relation by that name. Isn't it a sudden discovery?"

For all the intended efforts to crush him with her withering sarcasms, Alice could not but help think, as she took a furtive inventory of him that he was a really splendid young fellow, with the most effective blue eyes, and a blonde mustache that was enchantingly lovely. If only he had not been after the school!

"It was rather a sudden discovery, Alice, I think, but R.—Mr. Osmond has explained that his stepmother's second cousin was an aunt by marriage to your poor dear father's cousin John."

Alice looked at him a moment.

"Oh! Indeed! I am surprised. I never heard of it before!"

And the intonation of her voice was indescribable.

Mr. Osmond took it very pleasantly, however, and so completely ignored all Alice's silly little sarcasms that the girl could hardly keep from flying at him.

"I'll never tell him he is to be on hand at four o'clock to-morrow to enter his application! Let him find out the best way he can!"

That evening Mr. Osmond persisted in making himself very agreeable; he was a grand, good conversationalist, and could sing very creditably in a mellow, expressive tenor voice, and accompany himself on the little old-fashioned melodeon. He chatted pleasantly with Mrs. Aylmer, made a staunch friend of twelve-year-old Bob, and was so apparently oblivious of Alice's frigidity that he almost succeeded in making her fly away with herself, instead of herself, admiring him.

The hot tea came springing to her bonny eyes, but she jerked down her veil and managed to say something passable, and then got herself home, almost crazy with the shame that awaited her—for she never dreamed of doing anything but telling the honest truth.

So, with her sweet face subdued and flushed with shame, Alice went bravely home, and straight up to the attic, and unlocked the door, and came face to face with Romyn Osmond, who had been in durance vile over an hour, and who wondered what the dickens was up.

He laughed as Alice came in, but the laugh died away before her face, her words.

"Oh, Mr. Osmond, will you ever, ever forgive me, or do anything but justly despise me for what I have done?"

And then she told him all about it, and Mr. Osmond assured her he was very, very glad it had happened, because he should not forgive her except on certain conditions, which was—to give herself to him.

And "later" he did tell her—a couple of months later, in a letter from his Western home, in which he asked her to accept the condition of his forgiveness, which was—to give herself to him.

And Alice knew then it had been a good thing that ever Romyn Osmond came her way; and she knew that the other Osmond was welcome to the school, forever, for there was no longer aught for her but love, and ease, and Romyn, her lover-husband.

"I've had such a delightfully busy morning," she said, as they sat at table, and Mr. Osmond watched her dimples and her pretty, tender ways, and thought what a lovely little witch this distant cousin of his was. "I hope you managed to get along without me, Mr. Osmond!"

Alice's eyes sparkled, but she veiled them demurely.

"I am real sorry I have had no opportunity to entertain you. If you have an engagement for this afternoon let me do what I can in the hospitable line before you go out. Shall I take you in charge until—what hour is your appointment?"

Her eyes were full of gay curiosity to know if he had really discovered the hour of the committee meeting, but their excited sparkle in no ways abated when she found he had discovered, somehow.

"I shall be only too happy to be taken in charge until quarter of four, Miss Alice. I already anticipate a most delightful time."

Mrs. Aylmer looked placidly on, and listened, then spoke:

"I really can't see what you'll do with him, Alice. To be sure there's the Museum to visit, and you might call on Bertha May."

Alice handed Mr. Osmond his dish of rice-pudding.

"Yes, the Museum and Bertha May—and you forget Bob's aquarium in the attic and his birds and pressed flowers."

Was she joking him? Romyn Osmond looked at her laughing eyes, and decided it made no difference whether she was or not.